the American Scholar

SPRING 1985 PRICE $4.50

Raymond Aron
EDWARD SHILS

Women in Greek Myth
MARY R. LEFKOWITZ

Large and Little School Teaching
LAURO MARTINES

A Sad Heart at the Department Store
MARJORIE ROSENBERG

The Dreiser-Mencken Friendship
THOMAS P. RIGGIO

Reuben A. Brower
WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD

F. R. Leavis
DAN JACOBSON

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Readable Loves

The Nature of Love
Volume 1: Plato to Luther,
Second Edition
Volume 2: Courtly and Romantic
Irving Singer

In the first two volumes of this unique trilogy, Singer ranges through philosophy and literature to reveal the sources of our contemporary thinking about love. For him, love is always an act of the creative imagination, and the history of love is a succession of new ideals about bestowing as well as acquiring values.

"Where Sartre began his study of being with a consideration of man in alienation, Singer begins with man in love, and what he has produced is a phenomenology of love. [Volume 1] is sound intellectually and experientially, and it points always back to ourselves." — Hayden Carruth, *Hudson Review*

"[Volume 2 is] a fascinating and comprehensive discussion of a topic of fundamental importance, both in the history of culture and also in every human life." — David Perkins, Harvard University

Volume 1 Cloth $20.00 400 pages
Volume 2 Cloth $25.00 530 pages

Fish
Monroe Engel

Harry Karp is "Fish" — cautious divorcé, deferential lover, meticulous observer, the narrator of a wry contemporary romance.

"[*Fish*] is, by any other name, a love story, but one in which the word 'love' is never mentioned. . . . Here is a novel 'filled to the brim with the wine of consciousness.'" — A. G. Mojtabai, *The New Republic*

"Human and charming." — Saul Bellow

Phoenix Fiction series
Paper $6.95 224 pages

Lord Dismiss Us
Michael Campbell

"Marvelous. . . . It achieves a sort of tragic beauty and is *really* about LOVE, which all novels profess to be about, but hardly any are." — Iris Murdoch

"A remarkable evocation of the process of growing up and the ghastly but somehow paradisal closed world of school. I admire particularly the extreme economy of the writing and the way the characters are limned chiefly by what they say — the true way of fiction, the dramatic way." — Anthony Burgess

Phoenix Fiction series
Paper $9.95 384 pages

Sex and Sensibility
Ideal and Erotic Love
from Milton to Mozart
Jean H. Hagstrum

"This book is first of all a substantial contribution to 18th-century scholarship. But more interestingly, it inquires, precisely and eloquently, into the literary and visual interpretations of erotic love from the Restoration up to the Romantic period." — *Virginia Quarterly Review*

"A crowning achievement, immensely ambitious in scope and alive with deeply felt learning and long-matured ideas." — *Choice*

Cloth $30.00 Paper $9.95
364 pages 32 halftones

The University of CHICAGO Press
5801 South Ellis Avenue, Chicago, IL 60637

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The new book by

Joseph Epstein

contemplates the decline
of literature today

Plausible Prejudices

ESSAYS ON AMERICAN WRITING

Is American literature an equal-opportunity employer? How long is John Updike allowed to be promising? What does Philip Roth really want? Who are The Sunshine Girls of American writing? Why does intimacy require euphemism?

Whether writing about the literary scene as it is and as it used to be, analyzing the works of contemporary writers (among them Norman Mailer, Ann Beattie, and John Irving), or looking again at "the older crowd" (John Dos Passos, Edmund Wilson, Willa Cather, and A. J. Liebling), the editor of *The American Scholar* is, in this new volume of essays, "a lively critic whose prejudices derive a good deal of plausibility from being strongly held, well thought out and backed by a large enthusiasm for literature."

—*Publishers Weekly*

$17.95, now at all bookstores

NORTON

W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. 500 Fifth Avenue New York 10110

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Challenging, Authoritative —and Witty. The Manchester Guardian Weekly

Is it possible for a *British* newspaper to add pleasure to your life? Indeed yes, if it is written with style, in uncluttered English. If it is world-famous, perceptive, forthright. And entertaining.

Waiting Around—A leading U.S. journal wrote: "The Air Edition of the Manchester Guardian Weekly is edited in England. In my opinion it is the most literate and entertaining newspaper in the English language. Apart from enjoying its reviews of books, plays, and movies, I find myself waiting around for its editorial comment on American life and policy. Sometimes reassuring, sometimes deflating, it's a salutary experience, clearly worth its cost." That's why its 45,000 readers *enjoy* it so.

Lucid, Lively—In addition to its accurate and courageous world reporting and lucid, challenging editorials, The Guardian each week gives you lively comment on the London scene and the British countryside; regular features on bridge and chess, and a diabolical crossword puzzle. There are also four pages of special articles and reporting from *The Washington Post*, and four more pages of selections in English translation from *Le Monde*. Thus The Guardian gives its readers a unique view of world events.

Don't Deprive Yourself—If *you* relish wit, good writing, incisive editorials, and authoritative reporting of world-wide news with a humour unusual in a newspaper, you should not deprive yourself of the pleasure of reading the thought-provoking Manchester Guardian Air Edition every week.

Now—As a subscriber you would pay only $52 for 52 weeks of selected news despatches, opinion and features from three of the world's most prestigious newspapers. To receive all this, please use the coupon below. Perhaps right now?

Manchester Guardian Weekly
20 East 53rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10022

Please send me 1 year (52 issues) for $52.00 ☐ *6 Months $27.00* ☐

NAME _____
please print

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

☐ My cheque is enclosed.

Please bill my ☐ Master Charge ☐ Bank Americard/Visa

Account # _____ Expir. Date _____

Signature _____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the American Scholar

Published for
General Circulation
by
PHI BETA KAPPA

EDITORIAL BOARD

G. W. BOWERSOCK
LAWRENCE A. CREMIN
ROBERT DARNTON
FREEMAN DYSON
PETER GAY
JOHN GROSS
GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB

HILTON KRAMER
BERNARD LEWIS
EDWARD LUTTWAK
ARNALDO MOMIGLIANO
EDWARD SHILS
CAROL HOUCK SMITH
JACOB STEIN

BARBARA TUCHMAN

JOSEPH EPSTEIN, *Editor*
CATHERINE S. SIMS, *Consulting Editor*
JEREMY BERNSTEIN, *Contributing Editor*
JEAN STIPICEVIC, *Managing Editor*
SANDRA COSTICH, *Associate Editor*
LISA McAULIFFE, *Poetry Editor*
TOM NIEMAN, *Editorial Assistant*
CARLEY STRAUGHAN, *Subscription Manager*

Advertising Representative: CREATIVE IMAGES, INC., 2108 Kingshouse Road, Silver Spring, Maryland 20904. Telephone: 301-384-2440. *U.S.A. Newsstand Distribution:* EASTERN NEWS DISTRIBUTORS, INC., 111 Eighth Avenue, New York, New York 10011.

THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR (ISSN 0003-0937), published quarterly since 1932 by the United Chapters of Phi Beta Kappa, 1811 Q Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009. Second-class postage paid at Washington, D.C., and at additional mailing offices. Copyright © 1985 by the United Chapters of Phi Beta Kappa.

POSTMASTER: Send all change of address notices, undeliverable copies, subscription orders, and other mail to Editorial and Circulation Offices, 1811 Q Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

Subscription rates: $4.50 a copy, $15.00 one year, $36.00 three years, foreign and Canadian $3.00 a year additional for postage.

Unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by return postage. No responsibility is assumed for their loss or injury, or for the views expressed in articles published.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Hudson Review

announces for publication, Spring 1985

Letters by WELDON KEES

edited by Robert E. Knoll

The poet and fiction writer Weldon Kees was at the center of the New York literary world in the 1940s. His never-before-published and witty letters describe Edmund Wilson and Mary McCarthy at home . . . a visit with Elizabeth Bishop to see Ezra Pound at St. Elizabeth's Hospital . . . candid glimpses of W. H. Auden, Marianne Moore, Truman Capote, Conrad Aiken and James Agee . . . a visit to the home of William Carlos Williams . . . the doings inside TIME magazine . . . the split-second make up of wartime news-reels . . .

Please send $5.00 to: The Hudson Review, 684 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10021. Subscriptions are: one year, $16; two years, $30; three years, $44.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CONTENTS

A Former Good Guy and His Friends
Aristides 151

Raymond Aron
Edward Shils 161

A Sad Heart at the Department Store
Marjorie Rosenberg 183

Large and Little School Teaching:
Reed College and UCLA
Lauro Martines 194

Women in Greek Myth
Mary R. Lefkowitz 207

F. R. Leavis
Dan Jacobson 221

Dreiser and Mencken: In the Literary Trenches
Thomas P. Riggio 227

Reuben A. Brower
William H. Pritchard 239

Mrs. Post, May I Present Mr. Eliot
Wylie Sypher 250

POETRY

He Was When He Died
Alice Wirth Gray 179

Extended Family
A. K. Ramanujan 181

Rain of the Waldensians
Brian Swann 204

Winslow Homer: Prout's Neck, Maine
Edward Byrne 206

Weather Report
Susan Rea 220

Last Words of Don Quixote
Paul Petrie 248

BOOKS

The Phantom Ghost of Modernism
George Watson 253

Reviews
Wilfred M. McClay, Mary Lago, Christian F. Otto, Elie Kedourie 268

THE READER REPLIES 285

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Selections from

George Eliot's Letters

edited by Gordon S. Haight

Fascinating letters written by one of the outstanding novelists of the Victorian period. Selected by Gordon S. Haight from his definitive nine-volume edition of *The George Eliot Letters*, these letters show Eliot's relation to every important social movement of her day, from evolution to women's rights. Headnotes written by Haight connect the letters and provide details of the remarkable life of this controversial and brilliant woman. Eleven new letters are published here for the first time.

"A book to cherish." —Leon Edel

"These letters reveal a depth of insight into Eliot's character which the selective details of biography cannot quite match. Her views of Dickinson, of Herbert Spencer, of Carlyle, of Tennyson, of Browning, and of dozens of other contemporaries throw light on several neglected facets of the period." —Leslie A. Marchand $25.00

Now available in paperback

William Faulkner

First Encounters

Cleanth Brooks

An authoritative introduction to Faulkner's most important novels and short stories, written for the general reader by "the best critic of our best novelist."

"A masterful distillation of complex plot and contradictory character. Typically, Mr. Brooks concludes his riveting summaries with a refreshingly direct and candid statement of the universal themes toward which, or around which, the plot has been moving." —Barbara Fisher Williamson, *The New York Times Book Review*

"Though it is intended for the general reader, Professor Brooks's insights . . . should be of interest to scholars as well. Written with the clarity and almost lapidary style which have distinguished so much of Brooks's work over the years." —Lyman Andrews, *Times Higher Education Supplement*

"A good and useful guide. Follow Brooks and you won't go wrong." —*The Virginia Quarterly Review* $7.95

Yale University Press

New Haven and London

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Life and Letters

A Former Good Guy and His Friends

ARISTIDES

I recently saw a copy of the high-school newspaper that appeared the week of my class's graduation and found myself a bit miffed to discover that I was not voted Most Popular or Best Liked or Most Friendly or Best Personality or any other of the categories that speak to the ideal, vivid in the days of my youth, of being a Good Guy. It may seem immodest of me to talk about myself in this way, and normally I should refrain from doing so, but the plain fact is that I worked sedulously at being thought not merely a Good Guy but an extraordinarily Good Guy and felt that I had greatly succeeded. Whence this interest on my part in being such a devilishly Good Guy, you may ask. I suppose it came about as a matter of elimination. Since I was neither a first-rate athlete, nor a notably successful Lothario, nor even a half-serious student, all that was left on the buffet of roles for me to choose from was Good Guy or thug, and since I hadn't the wardrobe for thug I went for Good Guy—and I went for it in a big way. Almost anyone who attended Nicholas Senn High School in Chicago when I did will, I feel confident, tell you, "Sure, I remember Aristides. He was a Good Guy."

What is a Good Guy turns out not to be so simple a question. If Aristotle had gone to Nicholas Senn High School—a notion it gives me much delight to contemplate—he would doubtless have been able to posit no fewer than eleven kinds of Good Guy and compose an ample disquisition on the nature of the Good Guy, or Good-Guyness. Perhaps a disquisition is required, for there is apparently some disagreement about what constitutes a Good Guy. Not long ago, for example, when I remarked to a friend from my high-school days that I thought I used to be a fine specimen of the type known as Good Guy, he replied that he thought I had not quite made it. I was very popular, he allowed, but I wasn't bland enough. The pure Good Guy, he argued, should be very bland. Your true Good Guy should never give offense, or even hint at the potentiality for giving offense, and I, who was locally famous for an above-average sharpness of tongue, was considered verbally too dangerous to qualify as a pure Good Guy. Very well. I can accept that. Let me, then, revise my earlier statement: Almost anyone who attended Nicholas Senn High School when I did will, I feel confident, tell you, "Sure, I remember Aristides. He was a Good Guy—only don't cross him."

Does the ideal of the Good Guy still exist? For all I know, it may have gone the way of the Cute Girl, which, I gather, no self-respecting female above the age of ten nowadays cares to be thought. But as I construed it then, a Good Guy was someone whom vast numbers of people felt to be a Good Guy. I thus set out to convince vast numbers of people. It proved no very complex task. Ben Franklin, whom I did not read until years later, remarks in his autobiography that, if you wish to insinuate yourself in the good graces of another person, the trick is not to do that person a favor but to have him do one for you. So the trick of making many friends, at least on the superficial level on which the Good Guy operates, is not to charm them but to let them charm you.

It was many friends I wanted: multitudes, large assemblages, whole hordes. To acquire them I was ready to turn off the charm. I was, in those days, the reverse of a snob; I looked up my nose at everyone. No one was too lowly for me to court. I became a boredom-proof listener, a full-time dispenser of bonhomie. Sashaying through the halls of our high school, greeting my innumerable conquests in the Good Guy sweepstakes, I uttered a stream

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of babblesome salutations not to be equaled for inanity outside a major league infield: "Hi babes," "What say," "How're you makin' it," "Take it easy," "Hang in there," "How's it goin'," "Be good," "Yo!" and fifteen or twenty other utterances of equal profundity that I have since forgotten.

In cultivating friends, I was calculating but not altogether insincere. If one way to make friends is to show a great interest in other people, showing such an interest, however artificial it might be at the outset, can before long issue in genuine interest. Besides, I not only collected but liked people; I liked their oddness and idiosyncrasy. As a good listener, I was taken into many a confidence and vouchsafed many a glance into secret desires, passions, fears—all of which the incipient if still quite unknown writer in me found fascinating. As a Good Guy, I knew how to keep a secret, never to betray a trust, and was, withal, a ready and reliable confidant. "Kids say the darndest things," a smarmy radio "personality" named Art Linkletter used to remark. They do indeed, and I like their saying many of them to me, which was one of the minor fringe benefits of being thought such a corking Good Guy. A larger benefit was the small number of people who, initially captured by my Good Guy maneuvers, have thus far remained lifelong friends.

Still, I may have exulted too much, albeit secretly, in this knack I had for making friends easily. Sometimes I would try this knack out, like a professional tenor singing in the shower at home, for the sheer pleasure of exercising it. I would choose a young thug ("hoods" we then called them), or a shy girl, or someone whose background was utterly different from my own, and set out to win him or her over to my ever-enlarging stable of friends. Almost always I succeeded. It was pure art, really—friends for friends' sake. In those days, had I had a reasonable grasp of grammar and syntax, I could have written a book entitled *How to Win Friends Without Caring in the Least About Influencing People.*

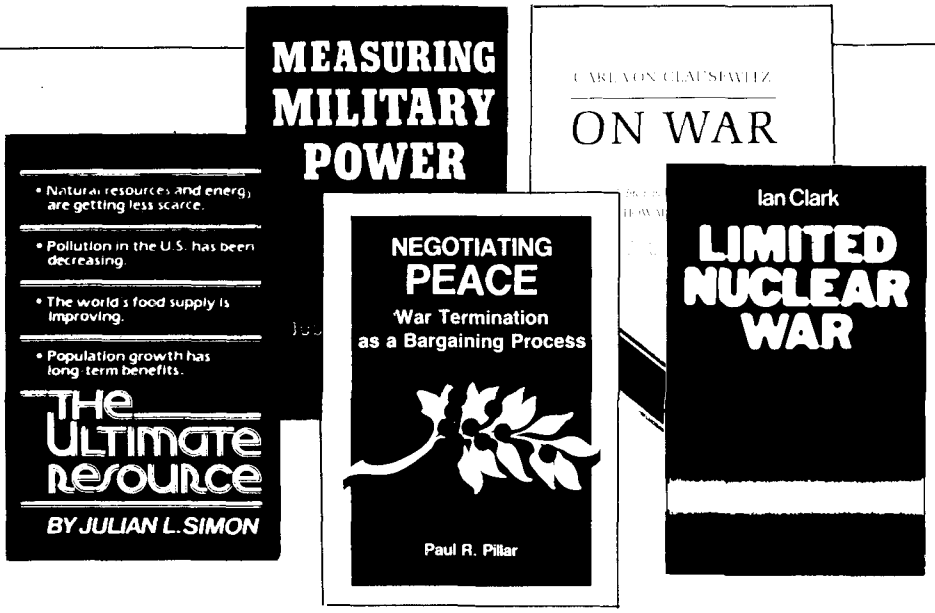
I merely wished to be liked, and only by everybody I met. To be thought a Good Guy by all—this didn't seem too much to ask. Occasionally it would get back to me that someone or other didn't understand what lay behind my considerable popularity. I felt my appeal ought to have been self-evident to him; I was, self-evidently, a Good Guy. Then there was small band of people around whom I stepped gingerly. They were insensate to my blandishments, these people—most of them boys but also a few girls—whom I thought of, even in high school, as "in business for themselves." In a rough sense, each of us is in business for himself—each of us, that is, is pre-eminently concerned about his own preservation and rise in the world and has a necessary and probably sensible selfishness—but these people were rather more selfish than was either necessary or sensible. They were generally rather intense and (no rather about it) humorless. The very notion of the Good Guy, with all his airy friendliness, was alien to them, and so, consequently, was I. It only now occurs to me that I was also possibly in business for myself in those days. My business was being popular. It was a pleasant enough line of work, requiring no character whatsoever.

I can write all this now chiefly because I am—as a great many people will tell you—no longer a Good Guy. I may not even be, to shift at last to lowercase spelling, a nice fellow. I have not yet arrived at the stage of Evelyn Waugh's character Gilbert Pinfold, who of himself asks, "Why does everyone except me find it so easy to be nice?" but I find I do not much mind making enemies. Some enemies seem to me eminently worth having. This is something that the old Good Guy in me failed to understand. Chiefly through writing a good deal of journalism and literary criticism, I have by now acquired, I feel certain, an ample supply of enemies. If the people I have written critically about feel as I do about the people who have written critically about me, my guess is that they have not altogether forgotten me and that, should my name ever crop up in their presence, it is cause for them to murmur a brief Bulgarian curse or a stirring undeleted epithet.

Perhaps because, as a former Good Guy, it has taken me so long to acquire enemies, I like to dwell upon them and on occasion I have even dreamed of them. In one such dream the people I have written harshly about are gathered together in a large room in a Manhattan hotel to throw a party for me. There they stand, as in a drawing out of *Esquire:* Joseph Heller, John Updike, Norman Mailer, William F. Buckley, Jr., Gore

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Princeton University Press



Measuring Military Power
The Soviet Air Threat to Europe
Joshua M. Epstein
$22.50

Negotiating Peace
War Termination as a Bargaining Process
Paul R. Pillar
$25.00

Limited Nuclear War
Ian Clark
$25.00

The Ultimate Resource
Julian L. Simon
P: $7.95. C: $19.00

Knowing One's Enemies
Intelligence Assessment Before the Two World Wars
Edited by *Ernest R. May*
$29.50

On War
Indexed Edition
Carl von Clausewitz
Edited and Translated by *Michael Howard* and *Peter Paret*
Introductory Essays by *Peter Paret*, *Michael Howard*, and *Bernard Brodie*
With a Commentary by *Bernard Brodie*
$31.00

Strategy and Nuclear Deterrence
An *International Security* Reader
Edited by *Steven E. Miller*
P: $8.95. C: $32.50

At your bookstore or

Princeton University Press
41 William Street, Princeton, NJ 08540

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Vidal, Renata Adler, Philip Roth, Ann Beattie, Gabriel García Márquez, and others too numerous to mention. In this dream I sit alone, in white tie and tails, at a long dais. Everyone in the room is standing, champagne glasses raised in my direction, waiting for me to speak. "Sorry, gang," I announce at last, a wide smile plastered across my face, "but no more Mr. Good Guy."

If early life taught me how to gather a wide acquaintanceship, and later life how not to fear enemies, the great mystery remains friendship. Aristotle, who devotes fully two books of the *Nicomachean Ethics* to the subject of friendship, begins by remarking that "without friends no one would choose to live," which seems to me quite true. Yet the quality and variety of friendship are nearly inexhaustible, and, as Aristotle says, "not a few things about friendship are matters of debate." The first matter for debate, perhaps, is one's own interest in friendship—or, more precisely, one's own devotion to friendship. "The only way to have friends," writes Joubert, "is to throw everything out the window, to keep your door unlocked, and never to know where you will be sleeping at night. You will tell me there are few people mad enough to act like this. Well then, they shouldn't complain about not having any friends. They don't want any." I suspect Joubert is correct about this, even though it means that I, who value my friends, do not qualify as someone absolutely devoted to friendship. I want to have friends, but on my terms—and, as I grow older, these terms grow more and more strict.

Although not usually at its center, friendship plays a part in many of the greatest literary works. Straightaway there is the friendship of Achilles and Patroclus. Cervantes presents, in Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, a lovely instance of a friendship between unequals and opposites. Dickens provides many of his young heroes with charming, self-effacing friends—Tommy Traddles, Herbert Pocket, etc.—of a kind we could all use in our corner. The friendship that develops between Huck Finn and Jim is of course one of Mark Twain's great touches—perhaps his greatest touch. The delicacy and subtlety required in friendship—almost always referred to as "personal relations"—is nearly the entire subject of E. M. Forster. In Henry James it is not so much friendship as the betrayal of friendship that looms so large. But the novelist of friendlessness is Joseph Conrad, whose heroes are among the loneliest figures in literature and among the most moving in part because of their solitariness, which gives them their tragic dimension.

Possibly the greatest literary friendship on record, and the most literarily consequential, was that between Montaigne and the poet and magistrate Étienne de La Boétie. The two men met when Montaigne was thirty, La Boétie thirty-three. Their rapport was immediate and perfect; each was able, in letters and in person, to reveal his soul to the other. In 1563, four years after they met, La Boétie came down with an intestinal ailment from which he died, with Montaigne at his bedside. Montaigne was permanently bereft. Donald M. Frame, Montaigne's biographer and translator, believes that "there is much to show that the *Essays* themselves are—among other things—a compensation for the loss of La Boétie." With Étienne de La Boétie gone, Montaigne had no one to speak with and write for but himself—and the world. La Boétie is the friend, and theirs the single dominant friendship, referred to when, in his essay "Of friendship," Montaigne writes: "In the friendship I speak of, our souls mingle and blend with each other so completely that they efface the seam that joined them, and cannot find it again. If you press me to tell why I loved him, I feel that this cannot be expressed, except by answering: Because it was he, because it was I." The void left by the death of La Boétie was never to be filled by Montaigne; references to him in the *Essays* are frequent; eighteen years after his friend's death, Montaigne can still be troubled by thoughts about him. Which is greater, having known such a friendship or its loss, is a question that troubled Montaigne his life long.

Such a friend is rare at any time, in any life. I have never known such a friend in my own life, and I am not at all sure I should want one. (I exclude my wife, whom I consider to be in the realm above that of friendship.) As a boy, I recall how important it seemed to have a best friend; and I, as someone who had made friends rather easily, had, seriatim, several best friends. I might have a best friend for a summer, or a school term, but gradually we would drift not quite apart but to a friendship

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of lesser intensity. In a best friend I desired someone to pal around with, someone to rely on, someone occasionally to confide in. I required no full communion of souls, not being myself a very soulful character. The notion of the best friend carries over into adulthood with marriage, where, traditionally, the groom appoints a best man, who is presumably his best friend. I have been married twice—I believe I got it right the second time—but the combined total attendance at both my weddings was two; I had witnesses in place of best men. Even now I do not feel the want of a best friend, but I do have a number of good friends whom I cherish.

Was it Plutarch who said that one didn't need more than seven friends? Until this moment I have never counted mine, but—dead on, Plutarch—it turns out I can think of exactly seven friends, very good friends, whose death or disappearance from my life would devastate me. I can think of a second tier of ten or so friends who enrich my life but with whom the same degree of easy intimacy and depth of feeling does not quite exist. I can think of a third tier of twenty or so people whom I am always pleased to see or hear from, in whose company I feel perfectly comfortable, and with whom I believe I share a reciprocal regard. (Although they are more than acquaintances, are the people in this third tier truly friends? There ought to be a word to denote relationships that fall between that of acquaintance and friend, but there is not; the language—as Flaubert once remarked in attempting to express his love for his mistress—is inept.) After this third tier, in the stadium of my social life, we next move up to the grandstand of acquaintances and the bleachers of business associates. The first tier has not changed, and some members of it I have known for forty years. Some come down from the third tier to sit in the second; and a few from both the second and third tiers have departed, either through death or disagreement, before the game (my game) is done.

"How many intelligent people do you know in this city?" a famous writer once asked me. Ours is a city of roughly seven million people, of whom he said he had discovered three who were intelligent. High standards, these, and behind these standards was the clear implication that he valued intelligence above all else in friends. I hope I don't insult my friends when I say that it is not chiefly for their intelligence that I value them, even though all are intelligent. Some I value for their point of view; some for their loyalty and steadfastness; some for their seriousness and integrity; and two or three for their goodness, by which morally freighted word I mean to imply a combination of all these qualities.

When I think of the qualities that might unite the first tier of my friends, I am hard-pressed to come up with any persuasive pattern. I share interests with all of them, but they are not the same interests. Three of the seven are not bookish; four of them have politics different from mine. These same four are my exact contemporaries and indeed were high-school classmates; the other three are older than I, one of them more than twenty-five years older. Sexist swine that I am, all seven are men. (About women as friends, more presently.) None is orthodox in his religious views, and from two of them I have never heard any talk of religion at all; and although one would think one ought to know this about good friends, for all I know these two are atheists. (Must make a mental note to ask.) Two—not the same two—do not live in the same city as I do. Some among these seven good friends of mine have never even heard the names of the others. All seven are united in two things: first, none is what I think of as a high-maintenance friend—someone, that is, who requires regular ministering to in the form of visits, daily telephone calls, or lengthy letters; and, second, all have agreed to appreciate me.

Along with appreciation of me, we also, my close friends and I, do not disagree strongly on any important subject. I am not certain how much disagreement a close friendship can bear. I don't think I could have a close friend who is a racist or an anti-Semite. I am not sure I could have a close friend who despised my politics; yet agreement on politics, though pleasing in a friend, is not for me, I like to think, decisive. I have found myself among fairly large groups in which nearly everyone agreed with my political views, and a most comforting feeling such an atmosphere can provide. But I have always been impressed by Tocqueville's remark, made in his *Recollections*, that in politics "shared hatreds are almost always the basis for friendship." Hatreds, even cozily shared ones, are not a good

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

basis for friendship; they too soon lead to one's having to accept the enemy of one's enemy as one's friend. The enemy of one's enemy, after all, can turn out to be himself a terrible character. Politics may make strange bedfellows but finally not very good friends, as witness John Reed, he of *Ten Days That Shook the World*, writing to H. J. Whigham, his editor on the *Metropolitan Magazine:* "You and I call ourselves friends, but we are not really friends, because we don't believe in the same things, and the time will come when we won't speak to each other."

Perhaps the reason the number of people I currently call friend seems so large has to do with my age, which is pretty near smack-dab middle age. Being middle-aged, I am able to have friends chronologically on either side of my own age: friends ten or twenty or even thirty years older than I and friends ten or now even twenty years younger. Meanwhile I retain my contemporaries, upon whom death has thus far made no inroads. With older friends, my age sometimes seems to dissolve, and in some cases I have felt something akin to experiential seniority to people twenty or so years older. I have been lucky in having some of the most interesting older people I have met take me seriously.

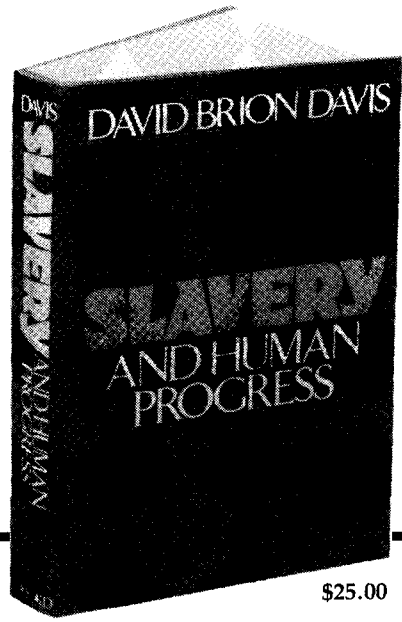
I had a friend whom I much admired, a man in his middle-eighties, whom I never met but knew only through correspondence. He first wrote to me about something I had written in this magazine; I answered his letter; and each time I wrote anything in this or any other magazine he would write to comment upon it and to dilate upon the same subject, usually turning out something much more interesting than I had written. In his business life he had been in advertising, and as the editor of the leading trade publication for the advertising industry he told me he saw it as his job to try to make advertising less vulgar. "You have only to look about you to see how successful I have been," he added. He had delicious irony and, being of an advanced age, he felt no need to dawdle over clichés or empty pieties. He seemed to read all the intellectual magazines, loved Trollope, closed out each evening with a page or two of Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* "because I find a page or two of his magnificent prose gives me a fitting way to end the day," and he even took the icy plunge into contemporary philosophy. He described himself to me as a compulsive reader, and once, before a national election, noted:

> Are you inflicted these days with fervid pleas to save the country? I get at least one in every mail. I will, for the sake of something to read, read an invitation to attend the opening of a new cleaning establishment but I will not punish myself by reading campaign letters. After all, even a compulsive reader has limits.

I soon found that part of the pleasing afterglow of publication was receiving a letter from him. Thinking to deepen our relationship, I once wrote to him when I was planning a visit to a large city near his own smaller one to invite him and his wife to lunch. He wrote back to say that his eyesight was no longer good enough for him to drive on freeways, his hearing was all but shot, and, since he went out less and less, he really didn't have any fit clothes for dining out. He thanked me for my invitation but would have to refuse. Besides, he said, nowadays he was much at his best in his letters. I never made another such invitation and we continued to exchange letters for a year or so more, when, one early summer's day, I received a letter from his daughter that began, "My father . . . died June 15th after a three-day illness. I know how much his correspondence with you meant to him. When he came home from the hospital last fall, the first thing he did was to have me sit down and type a letter to you on the horrors of modern baseball." A friend unmet but still missed.

Friendships with the young are very different. I have a number of such friendships, almost all of which have derived from my work as a teacher and a writer. I never set out to make them. But over a decade as a university teacher I have found eight or so students to whom, in spite of myself, my heart has gone out. All of them wish to be writers or to do one or another kind of literary work, and they, I assume, have found my acquaintance useful. I am a touch flattered by these friendships, for they function in the way that Aristotle prescribed for friendships between the young and the older—that is, these young friends honor me and I in my turn try to be helpful to them. With one exception, I do not have what Aristotle termed "friendship of the complete type with them." This is in part because we do not share a common past; in part because they, being young, live largely in the future

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



$25.00

"The best introduction we have to the extent and significance of slavery in the Western world."

—EUGENE D. GENOVESE, *The Atlantic*

"Only a historian who comes to this undertaking with two award- winning earlier books on slavery could draw on the rich body of scholarship that has been created in the last three decades, and then draw on his own research to generate a wide-ranging thesis. . . . Brilliant."
—LARY MAY, *Los Angeles Times Book Review*

"An admirable, learned, and genuinely wise book."
—WILLIAM H. MCNEILL, *Washington Post*

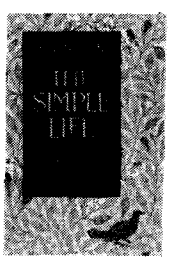
"Ranks among the most important studies of slavery and modernism."—*Library Journal*

Also of interest

The Simple Life: Plain Living and High Thinking in American Culture by David Shi

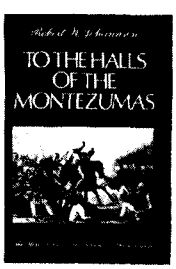
"A fine book. It gives us pause as we make our mad dashes to the bank and causes us to chew slowly on our crusts of honey-whole-health bread."—*The Boston Globe*

"The subject is an important one and its treatment by Professor Shi exemplary."—*Sierra Magazine* $19.95



To the Halls of the Montezumas: The Mexican War in the American Imagination by Robert W. Johannsen

"An elegant, eloquent study of a war's cultural meaning. A book of great significance."
—CHARLES ROYSTER, *National Humanities Center* $25.00



At better bookstores or to order direct, send your check to

Oxford University Press

Box 900 • 200 Madison Avenue • New York, NY 10016

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

while I try to live in the present; but in greatest part because, for now, we are not equals. I hope I do not treat them with condescension, yet the fact is that thus far along I have achieved more in the line of work to which they aspire, and it is this, achievement, that makes us unequal. (As they grow older and achieve more, this inequality narrows.) I have been on the other side of such relationships, the younger man who pays homage to the older who repays him in the coin of utility: by advice, by helping through his connections, by permitting conversational intimacies. Perhaps because I have benefited from such relationships, I feel gratified to enter into similar ones myself, now in the role of senior man. I feel as if I am passing on the baton that had earlier been passed on to me.

I have found the most delightful of such unequal friendships to be the most unequal of all—that between a parent and his children. Here, again, Aristotle is my guide; he notes that the inequality derives from the fact that a parent may disown a son or daughter for dishonorable behavior but, because his or her debt is too great, a son or daughter may not disown a parent. Is it possible, though, to declare one's child one's friend? Is blood thicker than friendship? I have felt something very akin to friendship with both my sons, and felt it fairly early in their lives. I remember an autumn afternoon on which I went with my eldest son, then fourteen, to Sears, Roebuck to get new tires for my car. I thought the job could be done in an hour; it turned out to take four. We had lunch in a Chinese restaurant. We walked the streets of the neighborhood. We babbled away to each other on all sorts of subjects. Because the car was still not ready, we sojourned to the appliance section of the Sears store to watch a bit of the U.S. Open tennis tournament while we sat on rolled-up rugs. "What a boon companion this kid is," I thought. "If he weren't my son, I can imagine him, when grown older, as my friend."

There have been times in my life when I felt I required no further friends; I said to myself, as one says when dealt a set hand in draw poker, I'll play with these. But this hasn't been so, and I am pleased that it hasn't. Even now, in middle life, I continue to gain friendships while I watch other friendships lapse or otherwise fall away. I am not quite up to the ratio of Evelyn Waugh, who in this connection reported: "In the first ten years of adult life I made a large number of friends. Now [Waugh was forty-three when he wrote this] on the average I make one new one a year and lose two." My own efficiency is not so high. I say "efficiency" because there are times when those of us who are promiscuous in our choice of friends feel we could do with many fewer. These are the times when the duties of friendship seem greatly to outweigh its pleasures. Lunches to attend, phone calls to return, letters to answer, obligations to repay—sometimes the duties of friendship (and these are the lighter duties) seem all too much. And they are often too much, unless, of course, one is friendless, in which case one pines for lunches to attend, phone calls to return, letters to answer, and obligations to repay. Friendship may know no happy medium.

Not everyone has the same appetite for friendship. P. G. Wodehouse once claimed that he required few friends. But then he was happily married and happy in his work, and this combination of good fortune doubtless lessens the need for friends. Friends are more important to the unmarried or the less-than-happily married, I think. That very social being, Henry James, who was a good friend to so many people and who always took the obligations of friendship with the utmost seriousness, nonetheless seemed, for much of his later life, a friendless man; and toward the end he remarked, plaintively, that he felt himself quite without contemporaries. Mencken claimed not to care much for the company of writers, yet for a long stretch he befriended, and championed, that otherwise lonely figure, Theodore Dreiser. Max Brod was a supremely good friend to Kafka. One senses that Melville did not get anywhere near the spiritual sustenance he had hoped for from his friendship with Hawthorne. The friendship award in American literature, however, ought to go to William Dean Howells, who proved so good a friend to Henry James and Mark Twain, two writers who had very little use for each other.

Howells never had to introduce James to Twain, luckily enough for him, for introducing two of one's friends to each other can produce a tense moment. How delightful when they turn out to appreciate each other! How dreadful when they don't! Then there is the tricky terrain when one of your friends

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

attacks another of your friends to you. Obviously, one must stage a defense; just as obviously, it must be a careful one, so that in defending your attacked friend you do not seem to attack the attacker. I have a close friend many of whose own friends I heartily despise and at whom, in lulls in our conversation, I sometimes like to toss verbal darts. I sympathize with my friend—I have been placed in this position myself—but not enough to let up on him. Why does it bother me that a man I like so much has friends I so dislike? Do I see it as a judgment on me? How, after all, can I have so good a friend who has such miserable taste in choosing friends?

What kind of friend am I? I try to be good but know I am not great. Perhaps it is that I am able to live very comfortably within my family, that my work fills up larger and larger portions of my days, including weekends; but I think it is accurate to say that I do not so much depend upon as enjoy my friends. Certainly, I am less and less aggressive in friendship; increasingly, I hang back and wait for friends to get in touch with me. I allow long stretches to pass in which I do not see people I care a good deal about. More and more I feel at greater ease as a guest than as a host. Apart from a small circle of very dear friends, the effort required of friendship seems to me harder and harder to make. Not long ago I let a close friendship die because I had heard that this friend had said things behind my back that were painful to me; more recently, I informed a friend who had moved to another, distant country that I could not keep up my end of our correspondence; since then a business associate with whom I was on my way to forming a friendship accused me of sharp dealing in a publishing matter, and so I suggested to him that, if he really believed what he said, we cease to speak to each other for a period of five years (we still have two years to go). Fifteen or twenty years ago I would have acted differently in each case: confronted my friend with what he said, kept up my end of the correspondence, argued my innocence with meticulous care. No longer.

As one grows older, one realizes better the limits of friendship. In my case, I have begun to realize how far I wish to go with my friendships, which is to differing limits with different friends. At the lowest end of the scale, I have false friends: I deem them false not because of any hypocrisy on their part or mine but because our friendship is made up of pretense on both sides, and it is the taste for cordiality that makes this pretense possible. As a former Good Guy, I retain a special weakness for entering into this kind of friendship, which is, like a magician's trunk, hollow at bottom.

Next on the scale are casual friendships, such as the one I have with the salesman at the shop where over the years I have bought my suits. This man and I have never addressed each other by any but our last names. Since I sometimes go two or three or four years without buying a new suit or jacket, the time between our meetings is ample. Yet when we do meet a fine feeling prevails, and I believe that this feeling is not owing to salesmanship alone. We have a certain regard for each other; we enjoy talking together about nothing in particular: my work, his travels, the city in which we both live. The last time I was in the shop I learned that, within the same month, his wife had died of cancer and he had had a stroke. People I have known better than he have died or suffered affliction, and yet their troubles have affected me less—or at least I have thought less about them. In friendship "casual" can be a tricky term.

I have other friends whom I don't think of as casual at all, whom I genuinely like, yet whom I am perfectly content to see on the most limited basis. I have a friend from college days with whom I go to one, sometimes two baseball games a year; we do not meet in winter. I have some friends I see only for lunch (and one or two with whom I am always planning to meet but never do meet for lunch). I have friends whom I see only when their wives are along; I have other friends whose husbands or wives I have never met. I have a friend who lives a mere two miles from where I do and whom I generally meet but once a year and sometimes less frequently than that. I have a category of friends whom I am pleased to run into but do not wish necessarily to see again soon; there is always a slightly embarrassed silence when we part without either of us saying, "We must get together again soon."

At a high-school reunion I recently attended—this was for the school at which I was not voted Most Popular, Best Liked, Most Friendly, etc.—I felt an odd mixture of elation

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and sadness, for such events, I realized, are really graveyards of dead friendships. It was lovely to see all these friends from my past. As Logan Pearsall Smith once put it, "The mere process of growing old together will make the slightest acquaintance seem a bosom friend." Hence the elation. The sadness came from the knowledge that there was no real hope of renewing any of these relationships, that at such meetings we jump back to our youth for this one night, but that by morning we shall recall why we haven't stayed friends through the years—because, that is, life has dragged us elsewhere and there is no point in pretending that we can drag ourselves back.

I number more than a few women in the second and third tiers of my friends, and yet I must add that I think of women as belonging in a different category of friends. Montaigne thought women incapable of friendship: "Besides, to tell the truth, the ordinary capacity of women is inadequate for that communion and fellowship which is the nurse of this sacred bond; nor does their soul seem firm enough to endure the strain of so tight and durable a knot." From such remarks are movements such as Women's Liberation made. One of the nicest consequences of the current Women's Liberation movement, I should say, is that it has brought out the fellowship (Flaubert is correct; the language is frequently inept) between women, making friendships between women seem, to pick up Montaigne's phrase, "tight and durable" indeed. But friendships between men and women are something else again. La Bruyère speaks interestingly to this point:

> Friendship may exist between a man and a woman, quite apart from any influence of sex. Yet a woman always looks upon man as a man, and so a man regards a woman. This intimacy is neither pure friendship nor pure love. It is a sentiment which stands alone.

I once asked Lillian Hellman about Edmund Wilson, a writer I much admired but never met and who, from his letters and diaries, seemed damned unpleasant. "You have to realize," she said, "that there were really two Edmund Wilsons: the man's and the woman's Edmund Wilson. If you were a man, Edmund had to prove his superiority to you by demonstrating that he was smarter than you. He was the intellectual equivalent of the playground bully. But if you were a woman, he could be very gentle, sweet, *galant*, even when he had no sexual interest in you. I of course knew him as a woman, and so have nothing but nice thoughts about him."

This seems to me very penetrating, and not alone about Edmund Wilson. I suspect we are all a bit two-faced in this regard, depending upon which sex we are facing. In discussing friendship, the moralists almost invariably contrast it with erotic love, holding friendship to be on a different level because of its disinterestedness, a quality to which erotic love can never lay claim. Too often when even the most decorous men and women are together the sound of flutes can be heard off in the forest, albeit neither party is prepared to gambol to them. Still, the gentlest wind of Eros can give an odd twist to a friendship between a man and a woman. Is it correct to say that when men and women are together they find it difficult to be themselves? Or is it more correct to say instead that they are most like themselves?

Let the flutes resound, let the winds of Eros blow the roof down, I know I am not ready to give up any of my female friends. I am not, in fact, ready to give up any of my friends. Aristotle says that a happy man has need of friends; I am not sure I qualify as his happy man, but I know I have need of mine: for the delight and support and affection they give. He also says that "it would seem actually impossible to be a great friend to many people," adding later, when considering the question of whether we need friends more in good fortune or in bad, that "the presence of friends . . . seems desirable in all circumstances." I agree on both points, while recognizing that I for one may have more friends than the philosophical limit allows. Still, this comes under a category that Aristotle, for all his marvelous comprehensibility, does not consider—that which I think of as the Happy Problem. For now I am fully prepared to live with mine.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Raymond Aron

EDWARD SHILS

RAYMOND ARON HAD MANY GREAT VIRTUES as an intellectual and citizen. Among these numerous virtues were a penetrating, pervasive intelligence operating over a very wide range, an exceptional speed in focusing his mind on fundamentals in the midst of a chaos of particular facts, an immense stock of knowledge in philosophy, history, economics, sociology, and politics, a vast capacity for unceasing and strenuous work, a quiet and tenacious courage, and sobriety and lucidity of outlook and style. All of these were in the service of a steady matter-of-fact patriotism and a firm and discriminating devotion to the ideals of the Enlightenment. Yet what made him unique among the intellectuals of his time was his practice as a scholar, observer, and analyst, year in, year out, day in, day out, of what Max Weber called the ethics of responsibility—*Verantwortungsethik*—in contrast with the ethics of conscience—*Gesinnungsethik*. The ethics of responsibility requires the unflinching effort to discover the truth and the readiness to accept disagreeable truths; it requires the courage to act in the light of knowledge, and to be aware at the same time of the inadequacy of that knowledge, while bearing in mind the limited range of possibilities of action and the costs as well as benefits of any action. It presupposes freedom of action within these limits. The primacy of the obligation of intellectual, ethical, and political responsibility that lay upon politicians and citizens, teachers and students, literary men and philosophers was the dominant note in Raymond Aron's active career as a university teacher, scholar, and publicist—a career that ran for more than half a century.

Raymond Aron's inquiry began in his dissertation, *Introduction à la philosophie de l'histoire*, which was a study of the possibility and the limits of knowledge of history and society as these were treated by four German authors of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; it was also a study of the historical consciousness and of the place of historical—and sociological—knowledge in action. It was a work of clarification regarding the powers of the mind to apprehend the reality of human actions and institutions in the past and in the present.

The central theme of Raymond Aron's dissertation—the conditions and limits of valid knowledge of history and society—remained with him

EDWARD SHILS is professor of sociology and social thought at the University of Chicago and honorary fellow of Peterhouse, Cambridge. He is editor of *Minerva: A Review of Science, Learning, and Policy.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

throughout his unusually variegated career. It was joined with an active practical concern for the dignity of his country and the well-being of his fellow countrymen, which was not merely a contemplative interest. That interest was inseparably intertwined with the knowledge of the inevitable imperfection of knowledge itself and the ineluctability of choice and decision. It began to take form in the 1930s after he returned from several years in Cologne and Berlin. That combination was brought more sharply to the forefront of his consciousness in 1932, when he first began to give form to his political views in writing. He had been given an audience by an under secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the Quai d'Orsay. He had expounded his strongly held views about National Socialist Germany and French foreign policy and especially about the danger of war if Hitler came to power. The under secretary replied, "The Minister of Foreign Affairs is a very exceptional person and he enjoys much authority. The moment is propitious of any initiative. But what would you, who have spoken to me so well about Germany and the dangers which are looming, do if you were in his place?"

That question never left Raymond Aron's mind. That question was always present in his analysis of contemporary politics in France and in the world. Decisions must be made and the actions that they require are always taken under the constraints of limiting conditions and of limited resources and with very imperfect knowledge; decisions, moreover, must be made with an awareness of risks and costs—but they must be made. Such decisions require courage in politicians, and they require courage in those who analyze the actions of politicians and who attempt to understand the world as an intelligent politician would see it. Raymond Aron very early came to know the sterile vanity of moral denunciations and lofty proclamations, of demands for perfection and of the assessment of existing situations according to the standard of an unrealizable perfection.

Although he was a socialist (in fact, he was a member of the Section française de l'International ouvrière, the French socialist party) while he was a student at the École normale supérieure, and although throughout his life he retained the humanitarian, secular, democratic, and progressive views of social-democracy, Raymond Aron also saw from the beginning that the government of the Popular Front of the middle 1930s was pursuing unattainable ends by ineffective and self-defeating means. He retained his sympathy and admiration for Léon Blum and for the kind of socialism Blum represented, and he preserved his intellectual interest in Marxism until the end of life; but he became, in fact, the most persistent, the most severe, and the most learned critic of Marxism and of the socialist—or more precisely Communist—order of society of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

present century. It was not prejudice that led Raymond Aron to perform this task. He accepted the task because of his respect for truth, his devotion to freedom and to the kind of society that sustains freedom and well-being, and his recognition that the world is a hard place, where ideals can be approached but can never be fully realized.

In an important sense, Aron was a man of his time but not a product of the opinions that prevailed in the intellectual circles of his time. He was an anguished witness to the weakness—decadence, he called it later—of French society in the 1930s and of its humiliation under conditions of defeat and occupation in the Second World War. When he returned to France in 1944, the agenda for the rest of his public life was made firm. It included the rehabilitation of French society, the effectiveness of its political conduct, the renewal of its self-respect, the protection of its unity in a regime of liberal democracy that makes provision for free disagreement, its integration into the wider civilization of humane and progressive liberal democracies, and the protection of that civilization from the encroachment of totalitarianism and the destructiveness of war. These were his daily preoccupations from 1947 to 1977 as publicist in *Figaro*, as well as in many other journals, and in *l'Express* from 1977 until his death. They were also his preoccupations in the academic career that he resumed in 1955, when he became professor of sociology at the Sorbonne, and later, when he became a director of studies at the École pratique des hautes études in 1960, and when he was professor of the sociology of European civilization at the Collège de France from 1969 until his retirement in 1978.

Raymond Aron did not direct his mind to the ultimate problems of human existence—he was too much an heir of the Enlightenment to think about transcendental realities; he directed it to the problems of his time, and he did so from a stable point of view. This point of view was defined by the prizing of reason and liberty and of the institutions, the society, and the civilization in which reason and liberty could be practiced and maintained and in which human beings could lead a decent life and have some influence on their fate.

II

At the time of his death on October 17, 1983, Raymond Aron was the most prominent and the most esteemed writer in the world on modern society and contemporary international politics. He was accepted as a towering figure in intellectual circles in France, Great Britain, Germany, and the United States, in Italy, Israel, and Latin America—indeed, wherever reason, learning, and moral responsibility are respected. He was never confined to the academic world by his professional obliga-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tions, which he observed with animated devotion and with a genuine concern for the university as an intellectual institution. He was known and deeply appreciated far beyond the boundaries of academic sociology. He had, in fact, become a celebrity known by the broad public that knew of Arnold Toynbee, Albert Schweitzer, and Teilhard de Chardin. He was the author of forty books, most of which were translated into English and many of which were translated into other languages both in Europe and in Japan. For a third of a century he regularly wrote many hundreds of articles on the current political and economic problems of France, as well as of the whole world. He was an honorary graduate of Oxford, Cambridge, Jerusalem, Chicago, Columbia, and other universities. Honorific lectureships, above all the Gifford lectureship, and honorific prizes—the Goethe Prize, the Erasmus Prize, the Tocqueville Prize, the Ordre pour le Mérite and countless others—were conferred on him. He was a member of the Académie des sciences morales et politiques and a foreign member of the British Academy, the American Philosophical Society, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and numerous other honorific learned bodies.

I think that no academic of this century—certainly no academic social scientist, with the possible exception of John Maynard Keynes—was so widely known and appreciated as Raymond Aron. In France, above all, leading politicians read his articles and sometimes invited him to discuss their problems and their policies. When he came to the United States he was sought out by the highest officials in the fields of foreign policy and national security. He was listened to attentively by the political elites of France, and by Robert McNamara, Henry Kissinger, and many others in the United States.

With all his eminence, with all the attention he received in high political circles, he was nonetheless isolated in the French intellectual world. Of his close friends at the École normale, one, Paul Nizan, became a Communist, two others, Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, became arrant, if singular, fellow travelers of the Communist party and powerful and popular proponents of the Soviet Union. *Le Monde*, when it was not hostile, kept him at a distance. It was common, when a fellow-traveling, highbrow leftism ruled the roost in the French intellectual barnyard, to speak of Raymond Aron as a "reactionary." In the 1950s, I heard a refined young Trotskyite call him a "fascist." This same young man, when he became older and more sensible, became a devoted "Aronian." It was hinted, because Aron was critical of the Soviet Union, that he was an American agent. His entry into the Sorbonne was not an easy one. Some professors did not want him because he was, so they said, a journalist; others did not want him because he was critical of Marxism and the Soviet Union.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

His life was not an easy one. It was sustained by the warmth of his domestic circle and a small number of affectionate friends, some of his own generation, like André Malraux and Manès Sperber, others of a younger generation, like Jean-Claude Casanova, François Bourricaud, and the group that gathered around him first at *Contrepoint* and then at *Commentaire*. It was only in the last ten years of his life that French intellectual opinion about him became more positive; there had always been a certain fearful awe before his intellectual power and his vast, easily summoned knowledge. The new attitude was more respectful, more admiring, even reverent. It was certainly not respect for age—he never gave the impression of being an old man—which caused this change. It was a genuine appreciation of the power of his mind and character.

Raymond Aron himself attributed the change in French opinion—not about himself but about Marxism—to the obvious gap between Marxist promises and the squalid record of the Soviet Union. He attributed the change in French opinion to the undermining of Marxist beliefs following Khrushchev's speech of February 24–25, 1956, and the shock of Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago*. Aron himself never drew any conclusions about his own rise in standing before French opinion from his observations of the changes in the standing of Marxism. Some of the change in attitude toward him should undoubtedly be attributed to these two large causes. In my view, however, the change in the French intellectuals' attitude toward Aron was simply that, even in an intellectual stratum as frivolous and as irrational as it has been in France for some decades, a vein of seriousness and rationality is inexpungible. That seriousness could not resist the evidence of three decades of rigorous reasoning and dispassionate mastery of facts, fairness to opponents in argument, and, above all, integrity and liberality. Raymond Aron finally gained a more just assessment from French intellectuals because even they could not long deny the force of his imposing virtues or the claims of their own long-repressed, better selves.

III

Raymond Aron's life, like all lives and especially those in the twentieth century, was much affected by accidents and by events over which he had no control. After the superlative achievement at the École normale supérieure, where he stood out among the most brilliant young men of his generation, including Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Lagache, and Nizan, and taking first place in the *agrégation* of that year, he went to Germany. He took advantage of the opportunity to go there in a junior post at the University of Cologne because he was uncertain about what

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to do with the rest of his life. In Germany, he interested himself in the philosophy of history, discovered Max Weber, perfected his fluency in German, and witnessed the descent of the Weimar Republic and the rise of National Socialism. After a stay of about three years, he returned to France and taught at a lycée as a replacement for his classmate and friend, Sartre. For several years he accepted miscellaneous academic employments, and in 1939 he was appointed to a professorship at Toulouse. He could not take up this appointment, however, because he was called to military service. After the disintegration of the French army, he managed to make his way to London. Shortly after his arrival, General de Gaulle, under the influence of André Labarthe, decided that an intellectual review to uphold the idea of France in cultural matters should be published in England. Aron, who had meanwhile rejoined the French forces, became the review's political commentator, each month writing an article and a survey of the internal situation in France; he was also in effect the managing editor until his return to France in 1944.

There he became a publicist, at first with *Combat* and then with *Figaro*. He was pressed to join the staff of *Le Monde*, but he chose *Figaro* because, being a morning paper, its schedule of work would allow him to concentrate on his scholarly studies in the mornings and to give the later part of each day to journalism. During much of this time he also lectured at the École nationale d'administration and the Institut d'études politiques. When he returned to the university, he continued his career as a publicist with undiminished activity.

It was a unique career. There were academics who had been journalists—Franklin Giddings at Columbia and L. T. Hobhouse at the London School of Economics, among the sociologists of the two generations before Aron, had been editorial writers—and there were academics who became journalists. There were many academics who wrote frequently in newspapers: Harold Laski and Denis Brogan and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., in English-speaking countries, Alfred Grosser and Maurice Duverger in France. Max Weber was an illustrious predecessor in this kind of occasional journalism by scholars. There has, in fact, been no shortage of these academic occasional journalists. This crossing of the boundaries between journalism and the university has indeed become a commonplace phenomenon, and television has further blurred the boundary between journalism and university teaching in history and the social sciences. In the case of Raymond Aron, the remarkable thing is not that he did both but that he did both so extraordinarily well.

This combination of two different kinds of activities and the unremittingly high level at which both activities were carried on undoubtedly contributed to his fame. The fact that he was known to be a productive and scrupulous academic philosopher and sociologist must have formed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

around his publicistic writings the aura that is even now seen as encircling a great savant. Whatever the dominant leftist literati in France said about him throughout the 1950s and 1960s and well into the 1970s, he was always regarded with great respect in the main academic circles of the United States, Great Britain, and Germany. His sociological achievements were justly known; the deference accorded to him was heightened by awareness of his subtle and realistic analysis of the affairs of the great world.

IV

Raymond Aron's combination of academic and publicistic careers was unique. He was a university teacher from the time of his resettlement in Paris after the Second World War until his retirement at the age of seventy-two from the Collège de France. Even before that he was an academic, in charge of a research center—the Centre du documentation sociale—at the École normale supérieure from 1934 to 1939, when he entered the French army. It was indeed only during the war that he was not active in academic life.

He began his publicistic activities very hesitantly in the 1930s; they began in earnest when he became editor de facto of *La France libre*. Thereafter they went on steadily until his death, being interrupted only by his illness in 1977.

Aron himself felt a tension between these two careers; he sometimes thought that he had not done the right thing in becoming a publicist. He yearned to devote himself exclusively to his academic work. He would have liked to produce more books like the two that he wrote in the 1930s on the epistemology of historical knowledge and the two major works on war and peace that he wrote in the last two decades of his life. That was what he would have preferred. But for nearly four decades he regularly and frequently wrote short articles on topics of the political arena, domestic and international. He also wrote numerous long sociological and philosophical essays, and he published many books, some of which were formed from his already-published longer essays. None of these books is simply a gathering of unconnected papers within a single binding. Each is unified by a common theme, and all are integrated by the "signature" that is always present in whatever an important artist or writer does.

In his later years, Aron felt occasional regret about his failure to write those longer, deeper, more scholarly works that could not be written because of that obligation to comment regularly on public questions which he had imposed upon himself. Yet such was the force of his intellectual personality that there was, in fact, no separation of these two

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

different occupations. The same fundamental values, the same way of thinking, the same preoccupations were present in all he wrote.

Something should also be said about the wide diversity of Raymond Aron's intellectual interests. In his journalistic work, he wrote with the detail of an expert and the penetration of a sage about the economic problems and internal political affairs of the United States, Great Britain, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, the Soviet Union, Israel, Japan, Communist China, and India. He wrote with equal mastery of detail and wide perspective about the international economic and military order. He discussed military strategy and military weapons. His writings commanded the careful attention of specialized scholars and persons in responsible positions in many countries, yet they could be instructively understood by the intelligent layman. As an academic, he wrote with unquestionable scholarly authority on the main German thinkers in historical and sociological theory, on the structures of modern societies, on military strategy and international relations, on Thucydides, Montesquieu, and Machiavelli, on Marxism in its variant forms, on intellectuals, on economic and social development, and on current economic policies. The list of topics he wrote on could be much extended. He did not experience any tension in keeping in balance this exceptionally broad range of subjects, each of which has its own large body of literature. There were good reasons why he felt no strain in mastering so many different fields of intellectual interest.

Yet he did experience a tension about the duality of his professional life. My own view is that he had, despite his own feelings about it, no grounds for a sense of strain in contemplating his dual career. There was a genuine unity that embraced all his activities; it was imposed by the unity of outlook that pervaded all his very diverse intellectual interests. That same unity of outlook made his dual professional career into a complex but single intellectual activity.

There were other heterogeneities in Aron's existence about which he at times felt a strain. One of these was his consciousness of being Jewish while at the same time being a Frenchman. This was not all salient in his mind until his first sight of National Socialism in the last years of the Weimar Republic. Although he was a non-practicing, non-believing Jew, he was conscious of being of Jewish origin, but he did not regard that in itself as setting him apart from other Frenchmen. Nevertheless, in the 1930s he was inhibited from trying to tell Frenchmen the truth about Hitler because he was apprehensive lest, because he was a Jew, his objectivity would be questioned. So it continued until President de Gaulle in 1967 made his disparaging statement about the Jews. This evoked in Aron's mind the anti-Semitism of Drumont and of Vichy France, and he wrote a powerful denunciation of de Gaulle's statement.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But by this time he had ceased to fear that his objectivity or good faith could be placed in question.

There was another heterogeneity in Raymond Aron's intellectual constitution about which he had no reservations or doubts whatsoever. The inner heterogeneity of being French, European, and "transatlantic" was one that he accepted entirely without self-consciousness. He was a Frenchman and a French patriot to the depth of his spirit. He was attached to France as a whole and positively; he was not one of those spurious patriots who espouses his own country only as a reflex of rancor against other countries. He was also a citizen of Europe—not in the narrow sense of being in favor of the Common Market, but in the way in which it was once said of Georg Brandes that he was a "good European." Aron was practically as at home in Great Britain and in Germany as he was in France. He was as at home in the United States as he was in Germany and Great Britain. He was more than a "good European"; he was a citizen of Western civilization.

He had never been in Great Britain until 1940, when he came there from Bordeaux to rejoin the French army, scattered elements of which had reassembled in England after they escaped from Dunkirk. He scarcely knew English when he arrived, but in a fairly short time he became very fluent in the language. He did not live in the confinement of exile; he soon became well known to leading British academic figures. The tradition of sympathy with British institutions that ran from Voltaire and Montesquieu through Tocqueville and Halévy became part of Aron's second nature. After the war he came frequently to England in various capacities to deliver lectures and to receive honorary degrees. Thereafter Britain joined Germany as part of his wider spiritual homeland.

Aron's relationship with the United States began later. I think he came there for the first time to participate in the summer school that Henry Kissinger conducted at Harvard. From the latter 1950s for the rest of his life, he was frequently in the United States and was very much at ease there. He understood American politics in the same quick and sympathetically realistic way that he grasped all situations.

No other intellectual of the present century has had the familiarity and sympathy with the major Western countries that Raymond Aron had. Denis Brogan knew France and the United States, and Isaiah Berlin acquired a very acute knowledge of America in the war years. But neither of them knew Germany as deeply as Aron did, and neither of them took the welfare of these foreign countries into their care in the way in which Aron did. They were part of his larger family—they were not kinsmen who intermittently entered into his consciousness, they were steadily there. They were a third circle—beyond his own immedi-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ate family and his intimate friends, and France—a circle of wide radius, the perimeter of which was always close to the center of his own existence.

The fact is that, despite the multifariousness of his activities, the diverse objects of his intellectual exertions, the duality of his professional careers, and the plurality of his attachments, there was a fundamental harmony in Raymond Aron's life and in his outlook. Without that harmony, he probably would not have been able to sustain himself so fruitfully in the face of his own sense of the tragic character of human history, his isolation from the long-dominant circles of French intellectuals, the attacks made against him by those intellectuals, and the obstacles placed in his way by the academics among them.

V

Raymond Aron, once he found himself in Germany, had wanted to be a scholar, a philosophic contemplator of the world as it really is, with his contemplative powers strengthened by his knowledge of modern sociology and economics. First the war intervened. Then, after the war, his attachment to and solicitude for France impelled him to attempt to contribute in his own intellectual way to the rehabilitation of French society by the clarifying guidance of public opinion and the constructive criticism of politicians and of governmental actions. Nevertheless, during his first decade as a journalist, he did succeed in writing several books that were not collections of articles but were in fact elegantly constructed, eloquently argued books: one on the wars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, another on nuclear warfare, and another—the most famous and perhaps the most enduring—*L'Opium des intellectuels*, on the alienation of intellectuals from their own society and their negativistic self-indulgence in the politics of perfection.

All this was not enough for him. He wished to be a professor, to teach intelligent young men and women, and to write books of depth of analysis and scholarly thoroughness. When, finally, in 1955 he was elected to a professorship of sociology at the Sorbonne against some resistance, he entered a period of even greater productivity. He published a major book on the great figures of sociological thought from Montesquieu to Max Weber, which is now one of the most authoritative works on the subject, and three small books on modern liberal-democratic and totalitarian societies. These four books were based on lectures delivered to his students, and they are evidence of his sense of pedagogical responsibility as well as of the power of his thought. He also published at this time a work that has since become a classic on peace and war among states. During this decade and a half of extraordinary

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

intellectual exertion, he also continued his publicistic activity in *Figaro* at the same high level and with unchanged frequency, ceasing only because of changes in the ownership and control of that newspaper. Three of his most impressive achievements as a publicist occurred in this period. These were his writings on the necessity of French decolonization of Algeria, on President de Gaulle's disparagement of Israel and the Jews, and on the "student revolution."

Aron was not, however, satisfied with these accomplishments, and he resigned from *Figaro* in order to concentrate on his scholarly works. In 1970, he was elected to the Collège de France, a distinction that had not been accorded to even the renowned Durkheim. During his tenure there he wrote his great book on Clausewitz and military strategy that showed what the learned world had lost, through the publicistic diversion of his enormous energy and his powerful mind, to the hurly-burly of politics.

In 1977, after the vexatious experience of his last months at *Figaro*, he suffered a stroke that deprived him of the power of speech and, indeed, threatened his life. He recovered completely all of his powers of speech and mind, resumed his journalistic activity in *l'Express* and *Commentaire*, and continued to write with his habitual clarity and fluency. His *Memoires*, which appeared in the last year of his life, is in itself a monumental account of the substance of sixty years of European and American intellectual life. It is also a vivid, often touching portrait of a very exceptional moral and intellectual personality.

Toward the end of his life, Raymond Aron permitted to be published a series of interviews, fragments of which were broadcast on French television. Two young persons, both of leftist political convictions, undertook to cross-examine him. They had studied his writings, of which they disapproved, and they were determined to put him in the dock. The result, *Le Spectateur engagé*, is a fascinating, quietly dramatic unfolding of the history of Raymond Aron's intellectual and political development and a fresh revelation of his constancy of demeanor and conviction. It is also a portrait of a noble moral personality, modest and self-questioning, of a delicate courtesy, of frankness and courage. It is such a testimonial to Raymond Aron's transparent and unshakable honesty, his patent determination to know and tell the truth, and above all his willingness to discuss—not just to expound—his convictions that, by the end of the interviews, the two young leftists who had come to demonstrate his faults, became his friends and admirers.

VI

Raymond Aron's accuser-interrogators repeatedly intimated in these interviews on television, as their elders have said before, that Raymond

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Aron had no heart, that he was without compassion, that he was a conservative without any feeling of sympathy for the poor in France and elsewhere in the world. His response to their charges and all his writings on modern societies showed just the opposite.

Indeed, one reason why he was such an outstanding observer of French life was that he had an embracing consciousness of his fellow countrymen. Without that fellow feeling he could never have understood his fellow countrymen, including those with whom he disagreed, such as the conservatives and the socialists before the war, the Vichyites, and, to some extent, the Gaullists during the war, and the Communist leftist intellectuals after the war.

Raymond Aron in his lifetime was accused by his detractors, who became fewer and fewer as the years went on, of being indifferent to the unhappiness of human beings. Nothing could have been further from the truth. He had, on the contrary, a remarkable tenderness and refinement of sentiment; it was expressed with such dignity and courtesy that persons who were not in his most intimate circle of friends might mistake it for an utter absence of sentiment, as no more than a polished instance of the *politesse française* that has now become so rare. Others, who knew him only from his writings and who had become used to the emotionally effusive rhetoric of those who think that passionate sentiment is all, and who think that a good purpose is served by wearing their bleeding hearts on their sleeves, also thought that Raymond Aron was a detached observer of an icy coldness. They were wrong. They mistook a dispassionate consideration of the merits and defects of alternative possibilities of action as moral indifference.

Raymond Aron never engaged in moralistic denunciations of those with whom he disagreed. He wrote against their arguments, not against them personally. He distinguished between persons and arguments. He did not discuss the motives of his adversaries; he examined their arguments. He was never abusive even when he was abused; he wrote polemics, but they were factual and logical, and he never insulted his adversaries as they insulted him. The same courtesy that was characteristic of his conduct in dealing with whomever he met was present in his dealings with those with whom he contended in writing. There was a tone of deeply felt sentiment in his voice, but what that voice said was invariably about intellectually stated arguments, his own and those of others. He was profound and affectionate in his personal attachments, and he remained faithful to the friends of his youth even when, as in the case of Sartre, the friend made himself into an abusive adversary.

It has always been a charge of the romantics against the Enlightenment that its cold rationality had driven enchantment out of the world. Raymond Aron was a direct continuator of the Enlightenment. He

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

believed in and practiced the exercise of reason and the realistic assessment of possible courses of action in public life.

The virtues that he praised were impossible to realize in societies in which rulers thought that they had the ultimate and correct answer to every problem and would not permit the free exercise of reason and the free pursuit of truth that might lead to conclusions differing from their own. He also prized the freedom of the individual to pursue, within the limits of his resources and his obligations to others, ends that he thought right. That is why he espoused the cause of a pluralistic society, of competitive political parties, free elections, representative institutions, and a free press. That is why he opposed those who regarded the Soviet Union or some variant of it as the ideal. That is also the reason why he opposed the expansion of the Soviet system to other societies.

Although he regarded the free exercise of reason, the free pursuit of truth, and the freedom of action of individuals and groups as among the chief criteria by which the merit of a society should be assessed, he was acutely aware of the imperfection of even the best societies—and Western liberal-democratic societies, not least. He had no confidence in claims of perfection. No society, he thought, could be perfect, and every society was justly subject to criticism. He did not exempt Western liberal-democratic societies from these strictures. He was well aware of their imperfections with respect to equality and justice, but he thought that their merits and demerits must be realistically assessed in the light of plausible alternatives.

He was not a rationalist. He was conscious of the possibility of error in reasoning; he was, above all, conscious of the insufficiency of knowledge of the present and of the unforeseeability of the future. Theories or doctrines that claimed certainty were intellectually and temperamentally repugnant to him. That is why Marxism-Leninism and their variants, which confidently claimed to foresee the future as the culmination of an inevitable historical process, were even more unacceptable. He was a man of reason and truth who understood the frailty of reason and the obstacles to gaining knowledge of reality. Doctrines that asserted "the meaning of history" and expounded the correct way to realize that meaning were inimical, he was convinced, to the free exercise of reason and to the free pursuit of truth as well as to responsible and realistic action.

Utopias did not attract him because he thought that their proponents avoided, for the sake of an ultimate and unrealizable condition of perfection, a seriously taken responsibility in judgment and action. He himself eschewed the unqualified censure of politicians from the standpoint of an ideal that he regarded as unrealizable. He emphasized constantly the constraints of political action and decisions. He was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

always simultaneously critical and constructive. He knew that no politician or government could act without constraints; in every situation there were, according to his view, a small number and a narrow range of alternatives, and every one of these carried with it costs that should be borne in mind in the making of decisions. A government or any politician in office had to consider the state of opinion, the attitudes of rivals and adversaries, and the strength of the support that could be mustered for the realization of a decision. The limited power of politicians and governments, arising from ignorance—from inevitable ignorance, not avoidable ignorance—the impossibility of foreseeing the future, and the limits imposed on its powers by the limits of the support it enjoyed from its supporters and allies and the resistance of its adversaries, whether they were domestic or foreign, confirmed Raymond Aron in his conviction that no government, and least of all a government in a liberal-democratic society, could act in a way that would satisfy intellectual opponents whose criticisms postulated the realizability of a vaguely conceived but nonetheless absolute and ultimate ideal.

These are among the reasons why he so patiently and painstakingly remonstrated with the intellectuals of the Left. It was not that he was unsympathetic with humanitarian ideals—quite the opposite—nor that he was unsympathetic with the more recent demand for "human rights." It was not at all that he ignored the misery of human beings or that he viewed with indifference their death from starvation and disease or their extermination by the brutality of war. On the contrary, justice in distribution of rewards and opportunities was in fact for him a vital criterion in the assessment of the goodness of a society.

In one sense Raymond Aron was the heir of the best elements in the outlook of the Third Republic. He retained a deep sympathy for those who came to the support of Captain Dreyfus and who continued that tradition. He retained, in a somber, less optimistic way, their appreciation of progress—progress in the sense of the increasing material well-being of humanity—their belief in the rightness and goodness of freedom, their conviction that reason and knowledge are proper guides of choice and action, and their French patriotism. Of course Raymond Aron was more aware of the seamy side of the technological progress that was necessary to the material well-being of mankind; he was far more aware of the limits of knowledge. He was even a "man of the Left" in his humanitarianism and in his hatred of war. But he had no confidence that the "international working class" could be counted upon to prevent wars, and he had no confidence at all that public ownership of the instruments of production would improve the lot of men and increase their freedom. He had studied the writings of Marx and Engels too

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

closely to believe that they were valid. He knew too much economics, he knew too much history, and he had studied international politics and military strategy and technology too closely to continue to accept the traditional doctrines of international and French socialism and communism. And of course he was never in the slightest degree a man of the Left as that term came to be understood after the formation of the Communist International. He was never blind to the mendacity and deceitfulness of the Communist party, and he was too intelligent not to see through the manipulation of the gullibility of the fellow travelers.

Nevertheless, although it was the Left that reviled him and sent him to Coventry, he had a soft place in his heart for it. It was his strong intelligence, his acute scholarship, and his moral courage that caused him to reject its false beliefs and its lighthearted self-deceptions.

VII

It is very difficult for me to take a just and final leave of a man whom I knew for over forty years, with whom I agreed on nearly everything he wrote and said, whom I admired greatly, whom, especially in later years, I saw infrequently, towards whom I was drawn by warm affection, and from whom I was nonetheless remote. I had so many common intellectual interests with him. I shared intellectual traditions that were very important to both of us in our separate ways. It has therefore not been easy to attain the detachment necessary to do justice to such a complex and many-sided character, to such a richly learned and such a polymorphous and yet utterly straightforward intelligence.

I first encountered Raymond Aron in his little book, *La Sociologie allemande contemporaine*, which was published by Alcan in 1936. As soon as I learned of its existence, I ordered it from G. E. Stechert, who at that time was the major importer of European books into the United States. I myself was spending a lot of my time on the writers with whom Aron wrote, and my judgments had been much the same as those he arrived at. The prominence he gave to Max Weber, at a time when very few sociologists knew how important Weber's work was, caused me to feel a kinship with him over the four thousand miles that separated us. The book was very much a *Jugendschrift*. Yet even at that early date, I could sense the courage that was one of his major characteristics over the remainder of his life. There was almost no interest in German sociology in France in the middle of the 1930s and no more knowledge; among the German sociologists whom Aron came across in Germany in the early part of that decade, Weber had nothing like the prominence he now possesses. It needed courage for a young man, in his first book, to fly in the face of his elders by praising so fully, in France, an almost unknown

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

German writer and by praising, in Germany, a dead writer whom living Germans did not want to appreciate.

I met Aron for the first time in the early months in 1943. We were introduced to each other in front of the offices of *La France libre,* which were in a fine residential building in Queensbury Place. I had come there with a Polish friend, Eugene Friedwald—a "petroleum journalist" who wrote on economic subjects for *La France libre.* Friedwald, or perhaps Karl Mannheim, must have told him about me; he appeared to know that I had studied Max Weber's writings carefully and had translated some of them. He knew that I had translated Mannheim's *Ideologie und Utopie.* He made a brief reference to our common admiration for Max Weber. He seemed pleased by my passing reference to the chapter on Weber in his little book. Then he went off with Mme Moura Budberg, the fabulous, then still beautiful friend of Maxim Gorky, H. G. Wells, and Bruce Lockhart, who performed some sort of administrative function at *La France libre.* I went off with Friedwald. Our meeting was very brief, but I still retain my original impression of his quick, yet sad and gentle, smile, the fraternal benevolence of his brief conversation.

After his return to France in the late summer of 1944, I did not see him again until the spring of 1947. Thereafter I saw him frequently in Paris throughout the remainder of the 1940s and until 1967, when there was a temporary suspension. He never varied from his, at least for me, somewhat shy friendliness and his humor, which was never injurious. There was a melancholy sonorousness in his voice. He never slipped into "personalities." He never flaunted his connections with prominent politicians. If he knew secrets, he never disclosed or hinted at them. He did not tell me things "in confidence." He avoided giving any impression of being on the "inside." Just as in his writings, in his conversation he drew on information that was openly available to anyone who went to the trouble to obtain it. The only time I ever heard him refer with pride to any of his writings was just after he had completed *Paix et guerre entre les nations;* his reference was not to its content, of which he could very well have been proud, but rather to the fact that he had written that very thick book, based on much study, in what was for me an astonishingly short time. He never referred to the honors that had been conferred on him or made other acknowledgments of his achievements.

Although during much of the period when I was much in his company he was treated by most French intellectuals almost as a leper was treated in antiquity, I cannot recall his ever voicing a grievance against his detractors. I remember a lunch in the late autumn of 1951 in a *cabinet particulier* at Lapérouse. Present were Georges Davy, a dreary Durkheimian professor of sociology at the Sorbonne and dean of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

faculté des lettres; Georges Friedmann, a very decent, once-Communist professor of sociology at the Conservatoire des arts et métiers; Aron; another person, whom I do not recall clearly; and myself. At the time, the "Gilson affair" was much talked about in the press and in conversation. Etienne Gilson earlier in the year had been visiting Notre Dame University. Gilson, who was a great authority on medieval philosophy, was much preoccupied with politics and was a vehement "neutralist." He had been writing for several years in a furious style against American foreign policy and most recently against the North Atlantic Treaty. Early in 1951 there appeared in *Figaro litteraire* an "open letter" addressed to Gilson by Waldemar Gurian, then professor of politics at Notre Dame, in which Gurian said that Gilson had declared that Aron was a "paid American agent." Gurian admitted that he himself had not heard Gilson say this but had it only at second hand. I knew Gurian well and he came often to see me in Chicago; on one of his visits he told me of the incident and he assured me of the reliability of the person who had reported Gilson's remark to him. This was well before the "open letter" was published in France. The discussion about Gilson's charge reverberated in France for a long time after the appearance of the "open letter," and it emerged in the course of our lunch. Aron uttered no recriminations against Gilson, although he did not deny that Gilson might have made the charge; nor did Aron attempt to refute the charge that was obviously baseless. I recall above all that Aron insisted that Gurian should not have written as he did on the basis of secondhand evidence and that he wished to dissociate himself from Gurian's accusation, regardless of whether it was true or untrue. He was pained by the introduction of personal considerations into a political discussion. Although his own honor had been impugned, he would not accept a vindication by improper means.

I have, of course, not read all of Raymond Aron's hundreds and hundreds of articles in *Figaro* or even the smaller number in *l'Express*. I have, however, read a very large number over the years, and I have also read most of his writings published in book form. What impressed me most, along with their sense of responsibility, their transparent cogency, their complete sobriety of judgment, and their amazing informedness, was the avoidance of any display of his "personality" and the absence of any claim to authority other than the authority of facts and rational arguments.

His reticence about himself was equaled by his consideration for others. His patience with Sartre, along with his generosity toward him, despite Sartre's brutal denunciations of him, is only one instance of his freedom from rancor. He always tried to speak of others in an understanding way. I once asked his opinion of Bertrand de Jouvenel's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

conduct in the first year or two of the German occupation. Jouvenel had been accused of being a *collaborateur* and in 1941 had written a problematic book that accepted the unification of Europe under German hegemony. Aron answered in something like the following words: "The defeat of the French army and the subjugation of France by Germany had deeply shaken and disordered the spirits of those who had to live under it. It was easy for me because I had to leave France being a Jew and so I could maintain my intellectual equilibrium. But for those who remained behind, the situation was very much harder. Furthermore, well before the Germans were driven out of France, Jouvenel had made amends by serving the *résistance.*" His appearance in court on Jouvenel's behalf in a legal action instituted by Jouvenel against an author who had accused him of having been a Fascist in the 1930s was another instance of his determination to be never less than truthful or just. (Aron died almost immediately on leaving the courtroom.)

I could go on and on in trying to be just to this extraordinary man, this model of civility, of selfless sobriety, and of deep and learned reflection. What stands out in my mind, in addition to his great qualities as a scholar and as a philosophical observer of human societies, was his indomitability. He was indomitable in the face of personal misfortunes, public obloquy, and the severe trials of the society and the civilizations that he sought to serve and strengthen. One of the greatest sons of the Enlightenment, he believed that reason could not be extinguished from the human mind and that his appeals to the reason of others would not be in vain.

Many years ago, Raymond Aron, Professor Arvid Brodersen, and I were standing on a street corner in Paris after lunch, continuing our conversation about the affairs of the human race. In response to a remark of my own, he said laughingly, *"C'est un pessimiste jovial."* I now return the compliment but without doing anything like full justice to the richness of his mind and character, by saying, *"C'était un optimiste triste."* With that I take my unhappy leave of Raymond Aron.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He Was When He Died

ALICE WIRTH GRAY

The dead man was "an unemployed mattress factory worker."

—The San Francisco Chronicle
June 28, 1981

Not president of Inland Steel
or the International Monetary Fund.
Not engaged in price-fixing
or planning the Hudson River Valley
breeder reactor. He was not breeding
racehorses. He did not suffer
from dental caries at the time
of his death. He did not meet death
in the arms of an art historian.
Not under indictment by the IRS
nor under investigation by the SEC.
When he died, it was not the first time
he was absent from the annual encampment
at the Bohemian Grove. Nor was he
stuffing ticking at the mattress factory.

At the time of his death he was not
concerned with a faltering professional
practice, nor did he leave an unfinished
painting of water lilies. Fantastic swirls
of red and blue tattoo did not cover
84% of his body. He died,
not at the mattress factory
where he didn't work. He died

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

not doing so many things,
it's clear his life was thickly textured,
deep. Uncommonly rich.

Mornings he breakfasted at the Bulky Burger,
one egg on a corn muffin and two links.
Being unemployed at the mattress factory,
he couldn't afford it, but he ate
with no sense of guilt, revealing his complex
understanding of free will. No need
to pity him: he was not a member
of an oppressed minority,
not on a disability pension,
not long out of love, no sort of scapegoat,
not working at the Sleeprite factory
on Cowan Road or the Simmons factory
on Fairway Drive or the Sealy Company
on 7th Street in Richmond or even
at any mattress factory where he
ever had worked. He was, at the time
of his death, not

✪ ALICE WIRTH GRAY's poems have appeared in the *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Poetry*, and the *Christian Science Monitor*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Extended Family

A. K. Ramanujan

Yet like grandfather
I bathe before the village crow

the dry chlorine water
my only local Ganges

the naked Chicago bulb
a cousin of the Vedic sun

slap soap on my back
like father

and think
in proverbs

like me
I wipe myself dry

with an unwashed
Sears turkish towel

like mother
I hear faint morning song

(though here it sounds
Japanese)

three clear strings
next door

through kitchen
clatter

like my little daughter
I play shy

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hand over crotch
my body not yet full

of thoughts novels
and children

I hold my peepee
like my son

play garden hose
in and out

in and out
the bathtub

like my grandson
I look up

unborn
at myself

like my great-
great-grandson

I am not yet
may never be

my future
dependent

on several
people

yet
to come

A. K. RAMANUJAN is William E. Colvin professor of South Asian Languages and Civilizations and in the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago. His publications include six books of translations and three books of poetry.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A Sad Heart at the Department Store

MARJORIE ROSENBERG

LIKE DIVINE PROVIDENCE IN AN EARLIER AGE, economic forces now constitute the ultimate explanation for the way things are. Thus, when economic causes are identified for the indignities we suffer, inquiry ceases, and we give ourselves up to resignation. So it has been with the passing of the Golden Age of the department store and the large specialty store—a period that spanned some seventy years from the 1880s to the 1950s. The names of the founding families of these fine stores across the country have been retained as the chains and conglomerates that bought them out in the fifties and sixties steadily lower the quality of their goods and services and blaspheme their principles of doing business. But the transition from family to corporate ownership is neither a sufficient cause nor a justification for the evil it has brought.

Silent security guards stand at entrances where uniformed doormen once greeted regular customers by name. Plastic chains, which must be unlocked by a salesperson, rivet high-priced sportswear and coats to the racks on which they hang. Every item of clothing bears a large plastic tag with a miniature transmitter that will trip an alarm if the article is stolen. But the tags themselves can damage unsold merchandise, stretching knitwear and fragile fabrics out of shape before they are ever worn. Standard practice today in the large stores that once represented good taste and high quality makes of the customer an adversary to be outwitted. And, indeed, the enormous increase in shoplifting and employee theft since 1960 has cut seriously into the profit margin of all retailers and made manifest the consumer's contribution to an increasingly unpleasant relationship between buyer and seller.

Yet it was the unprecedented degree of trust between merchant and customer that first differentiated the department store from its precursors. Previously, general stores and dry goods establishments, as well as itinerant peddlers, had bargained with purchasers over each item. If the process was carried on with some zest for its gamelike quality, there was

✪ MARJORIE ROSENBERG, a new contributor, is a psychotherapist in practice in Chicago.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

no question of the underlying ruthlessness that prevailed. Once money had changed hands the buyer had no recourse unless he could prove damage existing at the time of purchase—usually a difficult thing to do. But in the 1840s and 1850s a few merchants across the country inaugurated fixed prices, and—even more amazingly—allowed customers to return goods and receive their money back merely because they had changed their minds after taking their purchases home. The perpetrators of these mercantile heresies were viewed as so foolhardy as to be courting financial ruin.

Abuse of the system was confidently predicted and has certainly occurred ever since it was begun. Clothing has been worn, merchandise used—and then brought back to the store for a refund. Marshall Field is said to have dined one evening at a friend's house on an eight-hundred-dollar tablecloth purchased from his store. Congratulating the linen buyer the next day for selling what he had regarded as an overpriced item, Field was told that the tablecloth had been returned that morning. But Field did not waver in his practice, nor did the other founders of what came to be the nation's principal stores. Vastly more significant than the relatively infrequent abuses of the return policy were the degree of loyalty and the improved business it generated.

The visible characteristics of the department stores and the new large specialty stores that began to develop in the second half of the nineteenth century were marked and fixed prices, the money-back guarantee, low mark-up with rapid turnover, and the display of a wide variety of goods in distinctly separate departments. But the underlying radical element was the institutionalization of trust between buyer and seller.

The early founders of the most successful stores across the country reiterated and adhered to a Golden Rule philosophy and to the principle that the customer is always right, with a uniformity that can only lead to the conclusion that these conceptions were vitally important to their success. The language in which these storekeepers enunciated their maxims was pedestrian; the convictions were passionate.

Miller and Rhoads in Richmond, Virginia, printed on their shopping bags and on the backs of sales tickets: "Between the patrons and the management there is more to be desired than mere selling; an abiding friendship is valued far above profit." Marshall Field and his successor, John Shedd, constantly exhorted employees to refrain from pressuring customers into purchases and to accept returned goods with not only the proper words, but the proper manner. One of Shedd's characteristic memos concluded: "It is, to say the least, poor taste to suggest that we are doing the magnanimous thing—let us leave that for the customer to discern and appreciate. In short, let us meet the customer in the same spirit of courtesy and interest that we do in making a sale."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In Atlanta, part of the city's folklore is that the only recorded failure of Rich's department store to accept a return was that requested by a seven-year-old boy who wished to exchange an unwanted new baby sister for a football helmet. Rich's, under family ownership from 1867 to 1976, never asked questions about returns and, in taking back annually approximately twice as much merchandise as the average department store, accepted altered clothing, items returned many years after purchase, and even goods from the stores of competitors.

The zeal of early department store merchants to give to the general public a quality of service previously available to only the very wealthy found many expressions. Beginning with the architecture, they provided luxurious and even awe-inspiring settings for their customers and, in the new practice of encouraging browsers, made of these settings a public benefaction. From the mid-nineteenth century until the Great Depression, commercial architecture in this country—department stores, railroad stations, banks—exhibited the beauty and splendor that in Europe had been reserved for palaces and cathedrals. The Tiffany Dome of Marshall Field's, installed in 1907 and composed of 1,600,000 pieces of iridescent glass was, in fact, compared by an ecstatic local art critic to the nave of St. Peter's in Rome. In building these magnificent structures, the founders of department stores satisfied needs beyond the material and immediate, both for the public and for themselves.

The early stores displayed amenities that have vanished with the rise of the contemporary philosophy of extracting statistically measurable profit from every square inch of space—reading and sitting rooms, "silence" rooms for the frazzled shopper, specially lighted rooms where women could examine gowns to determine how they would look in ballroom gaslight. There were beautiful and spacious restrooms, and undreamed of was the now prevalent indignity of lining up to use limited facilities in which the doors are purposely cut narrower than their openings to make one visible to the next in line.

Apart from the setting, service was defined by personal attention from store employees and in the stocking of exclusive or unique merchandise, along with the accustomed range of standard items. These unstartling concepts are now regarded with disfavor by corporate managers who view a high employee ratio as financially wasteful and the stocking of unusual merchandise as financially risky. But service was more importantly manifested on other levels, primarily in the uniform high quality and durability of merchandise that provided the basis of the trust established by successful department store owners with their customers. Less often acknowledged as a fundamental aspect of the relationship between buyer and seller was the role played by the department store in the life of the community. Impossible to define in purely economic

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

terms, this role was the reflection of social and moral considerations that had their origin in the feeling of local rootedness possessed by store owners before the corporate era.

Rich's in Atlanta, which was looked on as a community institution—more reliable and humane than government institutions—was representative of this sense of rootedness. In 1914 and again in the 1920s, when the price of cotton fell to unheard of lows, Rich's bought bales at well above the market price to aid farmers dependent on the crop. In times of local tragedies, like the great fire of 1917 and the Winicoff Hotel fire of 1946, the store assisted bereaved customers financially, even providing burial clothes for many of the victims. In 1917, the store's open-handed credit policy was an important factor in the city's rehabilitation. But it had always been the case at Rich's that, to a remarkable degree, customers made their own credit program—farmers settling their bills only once a year when they were paid for their crops, sometimes not paying at all in a bad year. In 1930, when the virtually bankrupt city could not meet the schoolteachers' payroll, the store's president, Walter Rich, suggested that the teachers be paid in scrip redeemable for cash at Rich's—with no obligation that the money be spent in the store. Rich's handed out $645,000, holding the scrip without collateral until the city repaid the debt.

Serving as Atlanta's "Saturday banker," cashing millions of dollars in checks when banks were closed—with no more identification required than a driver's license or a charge plate—was another of the ways that Rich's served its community. Thousands of dollars were lost annually from bad checks, but Rich's did not abandon its policy of trust. For over a century, proudly proclaiming itself, "Atlanta born, Atlanta owned, Atlanta managed," Rich's violated, with great financial success, the principles of short-term profit seeking.

Varied as were the manifestations of community involvement by department and large specialty stores, crucial intervention with money and services in a time of emergency was characteristic of a great number of them. But it was their day-to-day practice that most clearly revealed a sense of responsibility to the community that, if it was economically motivated, was so in ways that considered the long-term economic vitality of the entire community. The local department store promoted the activities of civic, charitable, and cultural groups through window displays, advertising and special exhibits, and merchandise. The store provided decorations, banners, uniforms, sports equipment, musical instruments, floats—and consultation—for every imaginable public performance, sometimes free or at less than cost, always with individual attention from store personnel. Service to customers included classes in a great range of practical skills: knitting, dressmaking, cooking, canning,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gardening, contract bridge, mah-jongg—in short, an ever-changing program based on the changing interests of customers. The marvelous Thanksgiving Day parades of the J. L. Hudson Company in Detroit and Macy's in New York originated in the era of department stores as community institutions.

Even the commercial ideas of a more imaginative era implied a broader view of the public's needs than now prevails, as when, more than forty years ago, Stanley Marcus brought together twenty Gauguins from private collections and commissioned a group of ball gowns by leading designers in the colors of the painter's Tahitian series. The ball gowns were soon sold, but the Texas public, having had few opportunities to see original Gauguins, came to Neiman-Marcus from all over the state to view the paintings, and entire classes of schoolchildren were brought to the store by their teachers.

Today, promotions and classes—when offered at all—are tied to specific product sponsorship. The limited support of local activities undertaken by distant corporate owners is based, not on a relationship with the community, but on the possibility for tax deductions, which ultimately take more from the taxpayers than is publicly given to them. With corporatization and the atrophied role of the department store has also come the disappearance of the store owner as a public figure. Once visible, no matter how large and successful his store grew to be, personally greeting customers, inspecting merchandise and service, the store owner was a reassuring presence as well as a respected public figure. That store executives now choose to remain unknown to their patrons results not from inevitabilities of the corporate structure but from current retailing philosophy. Disdaining an active role in the community and an interest in the individual customer, they have no reason for visibility.

Unheralded—but fundamental—has been the achievement of the new, invisible executives in destroying the trusting relationship between buyer and seller so assiduously, and often lovingly, cultivated by the personnel of the family-owned department and specialty stores. Still publicly using language that pretends that customer needs and preferences determine business practice, corporate and conglomerate managers in the last two and a half decades have turned their attention inward, to their own organizations and systems. Seymour Melman, in his recent book, *Profits Without Production*, tells of the newly installed chief executive officer of one of the country's largest shipyards whose first major communication to his staff had as its key statement: "I remind you that we are not here to make ships. We are here to make money." Melman sees this statement as definitive of the thinking that has come to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

control retailing as well as manufacturing, the production of luxury items as well as basic industry.

Made possible by the intricacies of our tax laws and the financing of corporate and conglomerate structures largely through the securities market rather than bank loans, it is a strategy that has overturned a basic principle of economics—that profit is based on production and thus ultimately on the sale of products. A new world of money-making has emerged in which businesses can prosper as production is neglected or transferred to distant lands. Financial legerdemain is the key to success, manipulation of stocks and tax write-offs now being of greater importance to profit taking than the production and sale of merchandise. Profitability for large corporations and conglomerates increases as American productive capacity declines. Individually successful enterprises, in this system, may be shut down because tax benefits for the closing are, in the short run, greater than the percentage of profit. Current business practices that are not an inevitable result of our present stage of economic development, as apologists imply, but a direct manifestation of an underlying philosophy that is contemptuous of the relationship between buyer and seller have been responsible in the last twenty-five years for drastic changes in department stores and large specialty stores across the country.

Ever less distinguishable in appearance and service from discount stores and off-price outlets—no matter how high their prices—these stores reflect their corporate owners' exploitative quest for short-term profit. Unique merchandise, individual attention, and special services have become highly unusual where once they were the standard; the pleasures and amenities of shopping have been all but obliterated. Carefully displayed merchandise in attractive and comfortable settings has given way to warehouse-style dumping of stock on the selling floor. Whether the merchandise be apparel that is displayed on racks, small items shown behind counters, or large free-standing objects, the indiscriminate massing of goods, with a corresponding decline in numbers of sales people, signals management's emphasis on volume and price as the only matters under consideration. Occasional attempts at creating small oases for the attractive display of "designer" apparel are so at odds with the prevailing atmosphere that these areas frequently become crowded with fragile and highly expensive clothing that is crushed, wrinkled, and shopworn almost as badly as merchandise selling at one-tenth the price.

The great reduction in sales force that is made possible by the supermarket display tactics of department stores is, of course, a cost-cutting measure on the part of executives who do not wish to provide any service beyond the ringing up of sales. With such a goal, managers increasingly hire part-time employees to whom they will not have to pay

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

health benefits or pensions and whom they do not train either in knowledge of the merchandise or in selling. Customers cannot rely on salespeople to know anything about the stock, and employees themselves, correctly perceiving their limited role, have little interest in the customer.

The once-standard waiting room of the large department store, a place for the tired shopper to sit and rest, has been removed, as have the chairs that used to be scattered around on the selling floor for the same purpose. Keep 'em moving and spending is the idea, and, if they sit down, let 'em pay for it in a snack bar. The ambience of comfort, luxury, and beauty that was inextricably bound up with respect for the customer and the desire to cultivate lifelong loyalty has been sacrificed to a marketing technique that foists on the buyer huge quantities of merchandise as a substitute for real variety, and manipulation of prices as a substitute for quality.

The deterioration of American manufacturing competence that is a significant aspect of this technique is strikingly evidenced in a major multi-year study reported in the *Harvard Business Review* of September/October 1983. Comparing all but one of the American producers of room air conditioners with all the Japanese manufacturers in a survey admirable for its clarity and comprehensiveness, the author, David Garvin, states: "The shocking news, for which nothing had prepared me, is that the failure rates of products from the highest quality producers were between *500 and 1000* times less than those of products from the lowest." *All the highest quality producers were Japanese and all the lowest were American.* The data, the study notes, point not to national culture traits as the differentiating factor, but to deliberate and systematic practices of Japanese management that result in the vastly superior quality of their product.

No demonstration from statistical surveys is required to document the decline in the quality and variety of apparel sold in department stores over the last quarter of a century. The move to provide an ever-narrower range of sizes and styles is an avarice-borne tidal wave rushing toward goals of "One Size Fits All" and the cradle-to-the-grave outfitting of every American in blue jeans, cotton knit shirts, and running shoes. In this wave, women's belts, sleepwear, men's and boys' jackets, and sweaters have begun to be sold much more frequently as S, M, L, than in an extended size range. Women's shoes are increasingly differentiated by width only as Narrow and Medium, rather than the eight variations encompassed in the previously standard selection from AAAA to E. The manufacture of dresses that fit and enhance the female body has virtually ceased since the mid-1960s. Requiring skill in the design and cutting, which does not lend itself to large-scale production, and the availability

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of a department store staff to make alterations, it is an art dependent on an individualized approach. Dresses have come to be tubes or sacks that get their shape from belts rather than from a happy mating of design and wearer; or they are made—even at three-hundred-and-fifty-dollar price tags—with elasticized waists that at once circumvent and preclude a careful fit. Separates are what manufacturers find cheaper and easier to produce in huge volume and what retailers can sell with the least personal attention to their patrons. In a typical attribution to public taste of changes initiated for their own immediate profit, the purveyors then declare that separates are what the American woman demands.

The emphasis of department store executives on price and volume has glutted the market with standardized junk—endlessly replaceable items that are hard to take seriously as valuable merchandise, most particularly since year-round sales and the prevalence of discount stores and off-price outlets make a mockery of fixed prices. In an attempt to befog the avalanche of mass production with a false emanation of exclusivity, designer names have increasingly in the last two decades been sold to producers of everything from luggage to lipsticks. The name raises the price; it provides the most minimal assurance of quality and the reverse of distinctiveness.

Fashion in apparel is as dead as elegance, differentiation in dress having always served a primary function of classification—separating adults from children, males from females, marking age and class distinctions. The contemporary confusion in regard to these basic aspects of identity has converged with the greed of the corporate managers and allowed the uniformities of mass production and distribution to hold sway. Conspicuous consumption and evidence of conspicuous leisure, once major characteristics of fashion initiated by the upper classes, have given way to conspicuous outrage, initiated by young people, as the major variation from the mass-oriented product.

But how positively, or at least how docilely, has the American public responded to the transformation of the experience of shopping and to changes in the quality of merchandise offered for sale? The new mobile store managers, basing their careers as corporate stars on reports of annual profits, offer these in evidence. But such reports, reflecting manipulation of the tax laws and securities market as well as sales—and representing also deferred expenditures and hidden problems—can be taken neither as a measure of consumer preferences nor of financial stability. Removed from their customers, their employees, and the community, department store executives are engaged in financial speculation rather than in the business of determining or catering to consumer preferences.

Shopping remains, as it always was, both a necessity and a major

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

recreational pursuit. That it is more frequently than in the past a joint activity of husband and wife, a family expedition, or the occasion for a group of adolescents to get together is perhaps a constructive adaptation to the present limitations of the experience itself. Confronted by vast amounts of undifferentiated stock with necessary information often not clearly marked, and by sales people who are uninformed about the merchandise, harried by phone calls, and preoccupied with clerical tasks, the shopper can expect little gratification or assistance from store personnel; this only increases the tendency to create one's own support in making shopping decisions by obtaining advice and approval of one's choice from friends or family. But even here there is the recognition of an essential repudiation by the store of its responsibility to its customers, which begins to explain the anarchic behavior often evinced by shoppers. The groups of adolescents are commonly raucous and annoying to others; children, hyperactive and demanding; adults, careless and destructive of the merchandise they handle, which is, after all, carelessly displayed.

Even more negative is the indirect expression of resentment on the part of the public, exemplified by the shoplifting and employee theft that became the fastest growing crimes of the last two decades. Lumped together as "shrinkage," these crimes increased 200 percent after 1960 and constituted losses of about 5 percent of sales for major stores around the country by the mid-1970s, forcing numerous closings since profit margins in most department stores hover around 5 or 6 percent. In 1977, ten million dollars' worth of merchandise was stolen from a single store—Macy's in New York. Far more than the retail value of an item is lost in a theft. For every ten dollars stolen, enough additional goods must be sold to pay the ten dollars out of profits. Thus, a store that has a 5 percent profit margin must sell two hundred dollars' worth of goods to pay for the theft of a single ten-dollar item before the normal profit cycle can be resumed.

Resisting analysis of the causes of the problem and looking instead to mechanical devices and bureaucratic systems for their solution, corporate managers initiated the present era of confrontation with their customers. Electronic article surveillance—those ubiquitous plastic tags—were introduced and, along with them, the practice of chaining expensive merchandise to racks and providing salespersons with keys, like jail matrons. Closed-circuit television and greatly increased numbers of security personnel were likewise brought into the fray to "monitor" patrons and store employees. The latter, identifying with the resentful public as adversaries to the stores, rather than developing loyalty to their employers, became more responsible for theft than the customers, their opportunities being greater. But, in the current decade,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

it appears that average shrinkage has decreased from 5 percent to 2.4 percent, still accounting for losses of about one-half of profits overall, and remaining at 5 percent of sales for many individual stores. This reduction, achieved at the expense of further suspicion and ill feeling between buyer and seller, rather than by an accommodation of needs, has been accompanied by a great rise in credit card fraud.

Shoplifting and employee theft remain problems of great magnitude, and those whose business is store security assert that one out of ten Americans is a shoplifter, with young people accounting for over 50 percent of thefts. Such guerrilla warfare waged by the public makes visible certain otherwise unexpressed reactions. Recognizing that they have become counters in the financial games of store owners who have turned away from their customers and withdrawn from the community, consumers have met this great anti-social defection with individual acts of vengeance. Educated ever more aggressively to impulse buying, the public has responded with a loss of impulse control. The Golden Rule philosophy of the founders of the great department stores was a positive statement of the ineluctable fact that people tend to do as they are done by. The last twenty-five years have seen the emergence of the obverse of the relationship based on trust that they instituted. How marked is the contrast with a past era is indicated by customer behavior in response to fires that destroyed all the financial records of several stores earlier in the century. In a number of cases, including those of G. Fox in Hartford and The Emporium in San Francisco, customers paid their unsent bills, thus saving the stores from ruin.

That a return to such a positively reciprocal relationship between buyer and seller is not prohibited by our present stage of economic development is best illustrated by looking to Japan. Producing consumer goods of a higher quality than our own with a more advanced technology, the Japanese are not, as critical analysts like to think, functioning on the basis of centuries-old attitudes that are more socially benign than American national traits; neither are they paying wage earners less than is customary in the United States. Their guiding philosophy is based on a sense of the inter-relatedness of all economic and social activity and has not permitted a concentration on financial manipulation to divert attention from consumer needs and satisfactions as has happened in the United States. Largely free from shoplifting and employee theft—Japan is the only country whose crime rate has gone down since the Second World War—the Japanese are operating with a more stable financial structure and with different managerial goals than ours.

The Japanese firm is less interested in short-term profits and more concerned with the long run than its American counterpart—a goal made possible by the greater Japanese reliance on bank loans rather than the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sale of securities to meet capital requirements. Since the sale of stock accounts for less than one-sixth of a company's capital needs in Japan, as compared to one-half in the United States, stockholders lack power to press for showing a profit each year, and banks are as interested in a company's long-range growth as is the company itself. When companies are able to pay interest, banks want to continue to lend them money, banks being as dependent on sound companies to lend to as are companies on the banks. Indeed, when successful companies with their own capital want to cut costs by repaying loans, banks try to make continued borrowing attractive. With this financial base, the Japanese tend to judge success less by annual profit than by annual changes in market share—an approach that encourages genuine competition and, with it, the benefits for the consumer of quality, service, and distinctiveness of merchandise.

Economic direction from the Japanese government is not primarily regulatory, but is seen as supporting to the degree that Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) officials are called by their countrymen, *kyoiku mama*—a term for overanxious mothers who hover over their children, pushing them to study. What pushing is done is based on a comprehensive view of the entire economy and meets, usually, with voluntary acceptance. Thus, MITI indicates where a new department store ought to be erected and how large it may be; more important, government rules have kept alive small retail stores, often owned by elderly people and providing an alternative to a welfare security system.

Underlying trade and industry policy in Japan is a realistic awareness of the inevitable reciprocities between producers, purveyors, and consumers. Corporate managers in the United States, denying these natural connections and attempting to create their own world of systems and profits, have provoked anti-social retribution, as their stores purvey uniformity and ugliness. Their paper profits do not disguise an economy that has lost its preeminence in consumer goods and in wages, nor do they justify an increasingly powerful managerial class that prospers at the expense of the gross national amenity.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Large and Little School Teaching

Reed College and UCLA

LAURO MARTINES

REED COLLEGE AND UCLA: two worlds so unalike that teaching—or even just having coffee—in one is a different experience from doing the same in the other. My images of Reed are pastoral and vibrant. It is a small, intense place, conducive to excited, late-night arguments. UCLA is impersonal, large, attractive to tourists, and landscaped with imported trees, many of which are labeled with their Latin names. Faculty members there, like the trees, tend to come from out of state.

I taught at Reed from 1958 to 1962. It was my first academic job, and I went there directly from Florence, Italy, where I had just married an Irish woman and spent two years on archival research for my doctoral thesis. She was alarmed and dubious when shown Oregon's place on a map of the U.S.A.

On our arrival in Portland we quickly sensed the split between town and gown. Reed students went barefoot before anyone else did and struck the townsfolk as being bohemian. The faculty was thought to be pink, and locals had little truck with either. Reed was an enclave with its own particular tone, a blend of intellectual fervor and frustration. The fervor issued from its small classes, where instructors were expected—in keeping with the Reed ethos—to lead students in discussion, the more ardent the better. Conducted in a kind of intellectual encampment, this labor of intensity carried over into relations with colleagues, especially with those engaged, as I was, in teaching Humanities 11 ("Hume Eleven") to the freshman class. But there was also the frustration of exile, a feeling tinctured with mordant humor—it burned through the conversation of the scatter of colleagues who did not want to be at Reed. They longed for the city lights or believed that they deserved better.

In those years the college had about seven hundred students and a faculty of seventy. Class sizes ranged, in my experience, from six to fifteen students. My job was to teach first-year humanities, a team

LAURO MARTINES is a professor of history at the University of California, Los Angeles. His new book, *Society and History in English Renaissance Verse*, will be published this spring.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

endeavor, which turned out to be, I now realize upon looking back, the most exciting course I have ever taught. Hume Eleven zig-zagged across the millenia from Homer to Locke and was a requirement for all first-year students. It took half of their weekly class time: three hours of lectures and four more in conference. The lectures were given by twelve instructors from a variety of disciplines: literature, classics, philosophy, anthropology, history, and art history. All of the instructors were expected to attend each other's lectures, and in term time, on any Monday, Wednesday, or Friday morning, we all, save for that day's lecturer, could be found sitting at the back of the college chapel, the entire freshman class stretched out before us, all the way up to the front row of seats just under the podium. I have a sharp recollection now of that heavily vaulted, barnlike interior, smacking curiously of something medieval, with its huge beams of exposed buttresses.

The lectures were the public part of Hume Eleven, and the general practice was for each member of the *équipe* to lecture in his or her special field, though there was some overlapping. Our freshmen were sorted out into about twenty groups called conferences, each conference numbering fourteen or fifteen students and meeting four times weekly in one-hour sessions. Since the teaching load for most of us was two conferences, we each got to know—rather too well at times—some thirty new students every year. And then we might run into them almost daily, if they stayed on at Reed, for the next four years. I emphasize this, not having known a similar situation since, because it makes for one of the chief differences between Reed and UCLA.

The conferences were the private side of Humanities 11, and it was here that the gritty job of learning and teaching went on. Four times a week each conference group sat around a table in a small classroom, an instructor among them, prepared for a discussion, which might range from Homer, Thucydides, or Aristotle, to the Gracchi, St. Augustine, the medieval church, the Reformation, the English civil war, or other matters, depending upon the place reached in the syllabus. As the weeks passed, the fifteen students jelled into a group with a distinct personality. At every meeting the instructor sought to draw each of them into the discussion, and because there was no way of concealing failure to do the assigned reading, absence from the conference was better than embarrassment.

A tinge of intimidation sometimes touched the conference atmosphere—I have no doubt of this—but it was not necessarily the result of anything we did as instructors. Most of us, I believe, aimed at Dryden's definition of urbanity: good manners. No student, however, wished to appear a fool, and some freshmen were more outspoken, more combative intellectually, than others. This difference between the shier and the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

more aggressive students—a disparity that varied from group to group—resulted in a different collective personality for each conference. Some freshmen, therefore, were certainly intimidated, and Hume Eleven probably contributed to the attrition rate (withdrawal from the college) among Reed's first-year students.

One member of the humanities staff, the philosopher Marvin Levich, gave lectures that many students regarded as exercises in a type of strict, punishing logic. I suspect that some of his students, on going into conference, occasionally felt—as Bertrand Russell did whenever entering a room with John Maynard Keynes already there—that they were taking their lives into their hands. But at the opposite pole in style was one of the original founders of Hume Eleven, Rex (Reginald) Aragon, who was the soul of patience and understanding.

Every student in Hume Eleven was required to write ten essays in the first ten weeks of school. This sobering obligation underlined the seriousness of the humanities program that was a part of Reed's educational commitment. Furthermore, the instructors held individual consultations with students on each of the ten essays, a consultation usually lasting from twenty minutes to a half hour. We went over everything from rudimentary grammatical points to punctuation, sentence forms, and the presentation of arguments. In my twenty years of teaching, I have known no swifter method for turning primitive, halting prose into tolerable exposition, and of course the better students soon learned to produce superior essays.

Generally speaking, UCLA does not expect the performances described above from students or faculty. At least for the present, it cannot, owing to its funding, ingrained attitudes, and the character of its student body.

The recollection of two personal anecdotes marks some of the differences I found between teaching at Reed and teaching at UCLA. In my third year at Reed, a Humanities 11 colleague was having so much trouble with a compulsively talkative student that he had lost his place as leader of the conference, which was reeling out of control. We had a meeting on the matter, and the staff decided to transfer student X into one of my two conferences. At our first meeting in class, I saw at once that X was clever, well prepared, and exceedingly articulate. But he was also something of a show-off, inclined to browbeat his fellow students, and soon enough he began to angle for control of the conference. (Levich should have had him, I thought.) We tugged away during three or four sessions until I realized that if harried, if challenged or pressed with questions, X tended to back into a tangle of stutters that disabled him. This was the cruel tactic I used, I regret to say, to maintain my control of the conference and to keep it to the weekly path prescribed by the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

course syllabus. Chastened, X settled down and helped to turn that conference into an excellent discussion group. The whole affair came directly out of the Humanities 11 ambience, with its emphasis on debate, small groups, intellectuality, and student participation.

The other incident involved a Mormon student and St. Augustine. In that conference we were to spend three meetings discussing the *City of God*. Knowing that most of my best students in the conference were agnostics or atheists—such information bobbed up in discussion—I had decided to steer debate in favor of St. Augustine's position on the nature of pride and evil, so as to make things livelier and the pedagogy more effective. As our discussions proceeded that week, the student in question turned increasingly quiet and would not be drawn into the give-and-take. Abruptly in our last session on the *City of God*, he burst passionately forth to argue that St. Augustine was of the devil's party, that all his claims came out of evil inspiration, and that in any case the early church had strayed from the true path within fifty years of the Crucifixion.

Most of us were, I think, stricken, and when the student withdrew from Reed in the middle of the year, we were not surprised. The incident sticks in my memory, and I retail it not to suggest anything in the least about Mormonism—about which I know nothing—but rather to identify an important element in the Reed atmosphere of twenty years ago: namely, the ardor of intellectual commitment, the need to talk about the things that mattered in ways that mattered. Whether this heat came from living in an enclave, or started with the freshman experience in the Hume Eleven conferences, or was simply the work of a vital, continuing tradition, I do not know. I know only that for many of us at Reed in those years, students as well as faculty, ideas as such and intent discussion had a surpassing importance. The disposition came with the environment.

Reed was not—and I should think is not—a "trade school." I cannot say if any of my students then, at least as freshmen and sophomores, ever gave much thought to the question of careers. This was not matter for discussion. The college was not seen, certainly not primarily seen, as the highroad to a meal ticket. Grades were not given out to students—unless they dropped out of the college—until after graduation. Was there a pinch of mandarinism in all this? Very likely so, made the more likely by the fact that Reed lived, and lives, on tuition fees. A price was paid all around for Reed's intellectual flavor, and payment by some members of the faculty lay in their sense of unreality, or in the strains produced by the clash between their liberal social values and the heady pleasures taken in "pure" ideas. Awareness of this conflict was, however, intermittent—consciousness can be a marvelous grab bag of contradictions.

Reed's separation from Portland (was it our aloofness or theirs?) made

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for a closer atmosphere at the college. We were thrown back on each other's company. Moreover, since the campus was small and members of the faculty often taught classes on a near-daily schedule, we continually ran into each other. Faculty meetings were frequent, and as we were all expected to attend, I soon came to know all my colleagues by name—a thing undreamed of at UCLA. I could not use the swimming pool on campus, or run a few miles on the track, let alone play a game of squash, unless I did so with my colleagues or my students—again, an intramural pattern wholly different from what I now know in Los Angeles. At Reed we corralled ourselves: activities and audiences were entirely or largely intramural. Concerts, Christmas plays, readings, and public lectures were occasions, yet once more, for seeing one another. I think, because we were so pressed in together, that when we looked beyond the allure of ideas, we found only the trammels of gossip, frustration, and business connected with the college. Not surprisingly, dinner parties were likely to involve more drinking than I have seen since, but it had no effect—unless in a commendable sense—on the superb standard of teaching at Reed.

Aside from taking occasional walks in a cemetery on the distant bank of the Willamette River in Portland, or motoring out to the wild Oregon coast, my wife, Julia, and I had two other ways of making a fleeting exit from Reed: chatting in Italian with the owner of a local delicatessen or escaping to a cinema, the Aladdin, which featured foreign films. In private we always pronounced the name of the cinema in French. And here I detect a velleity: we could not rub a bottle and conjure up a genie, but to Frenchify the Aladdin, our instant magic carpet to Europe, was somehow not to be in Portland. Yet even as I write this, I recognize a terrible ingratitude, for our years in the Northwest were good, and Reed was a haven. Julia taught French at the college for three years; we had delightful friends; our students were bright and a pleasure to teach; I wrote my first book at Reed; and our son was born in Portland.

In 1962 the American Council of Learned Societies granted me a fellowship, and we returned to Florence, determined to stay until I had finished a second book. I resigned from Reed and then had the good luck to be offered a Guggenheim Fellowship for 1964–65, which enabled us to remain in Italy until I completed the book in 1966.

The invitation from the University of California at Los Angeles was a complete surprise, and we were very unsure about whether or not to take it up. Neither of us had ever been to Los Angeles or heard anything said in its favor. Also, we were settling down in Florence. Julia had a job there, in the International Interpreters' School, and I had just contracted to write several short biographies for a popular series, *I Protagonisti della Storia* (Great men in history). The new option, however, suddenly

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

seemed worth a trial, and so, leaving Julia and our son in Florence, I flew out to UCLA in 1966 for a semester, found the change invigorating, and managed to persuade Julia to make the move to Los Angeles.

On returning to the United States after an absence of four years, we found the political climate decisively changed, owing mainly to the civil rights movement and the escalating war in Vietnam. But the immediate change for me centered on the new campus and on my renewed contact with students—a needed tonic. I went from seven hundred to thirty thousand students, from small cities (Portland and Florence) to a large metropolis, from a faculty of seventy to one near twenty-two hundred (not all actually teach), and from a department of seven historians to one of nearly seventy. What was I to make of this upheaval?

Liking space and anonymity (the essentials of a private life?), I took at once to the UCLA campus and later to the city. Oddly, one of the things that most stirred me was the circumference of the campus, so similar in size to the walled-in space of Renaissance Florence but larger than other Renaissance cities, such as Siena and Perugia. Little Florence took on new meaning for me. I had the sense of almost feeling that magnitude has nothing to do with human excellence, and often thereafter in my lecture course on the Italian Renaissance, I would link the size of the UCLA campus to what Florence had been in the times of Dante and Machiavelli.

As far as I know, Reed College had neither undercover agents in classrooms nor police helicopters buzzing its skies in 1969 and 1970—though both were UCLA experiences. In the aftermath of events at Paris and Berkeley in 1968, tensions also mounted in Los Angeles. Students, creating the volatile atmosphere of those days by their agitations, made a direct contribution to a scholarly by-product: an international symposium entitled "Violence and Civil Disorder in Italian Cities, 1200–1500," the proceedings of which I later edited and published. I bring this up here only to point out that such a symposium would have been unthinkable at Reed because of a lack of funds. And this touches a capital difference between the two institutions: the one cosmopolitan, public, monied, and research oriented; the other parochial, private, modestly endowed, rather militantly committed to teaching, and yet proudhearted in its devotion to ideas. The pattern of difference appears throughout: in library holdings and research facilities, in faculty leave policy, in personal relations, in the whole conception of school sports, in the ethnic composition of the two student bodies, and in the range of campus activities.

At Reed I knew every nook and cranny of the campus. At UCLA, where the campus's north-south division is also a division in the branches of knowledge, I certainly know my way around the North

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Campus, among the complex of arts, humanities, and social science buildings. But I still need careful direction if I stir south toward the science, medical, and engineering complex. At the noontime rush hour, walking even in my own area, I am likely to pass three to four thousand students and recognize none. If one or two strangers smile and nod, are they, I wonder, current students in my large lecture course? When walking to the North Campus eating facility, I see Sears, Roebuck jackets next to outfits from exclusive Beverly Hills boutiques; I hear the babble of strange tongues, the sound of skateboards or distant sirens; and occasionally I catch sight of a basketball star whose face is known coast to coast.

My office building, looking like a giant chocolate bar with windows, looms up between the School of Management and the Research Library, where one may often find business-suited men borrowing books with library cards issued to corporate titans such as Occidental Oil or Bank of America. In the same library I have sometimes seen a squad of nine- and ten-year-olds from one of the ghetto schools being led around by a lackadaisical teacher, when, alas, they ought to have been back in the classroom, being drilled in reading and mathematics.

The North Campus—a radius of 250 yards around Bunche Hall, my office building—is the most cosmopolitan part of the UCLA grounds. Here Royce Hall, an auditorium booked by leading musicians and dancers from all over the world, attracts audiences from fifty miles around. Here, too, just north of Bunche Hall, is the Murphy Sculpture Garden, a smart tourist attraction with pieces by Arp, Zadkine, Lipchitz, Epstein, Maillol, Burri, and others. Groups of tourists from abroad, especially from the Far East, often make their way through these parts, as do many neighboring business people and corporation employees, who come to use the libraries.

For the large majority of students—no doubt rightly so—UCLA is a gateway to employment or to one of the professional schools. This comes forth in conversation and in the way of student concern with grades: not "Am I getting something out of this course?" but "How will it affect my grade point average?" This can make, I'm afraid, for a huckstering, philistine atmosphere. In addition, the University of California has seen a steady decline in the preparation and skills of students over the past eight to ten years. How can these circumstances fail to affect the spirit of one's teaching? In the smaller classes I touched bottom two years ago, when, in an undergraduate seminar of five students, I found that I could give no grade higher than a C+. The truth is that the students had trouble reading the assigned texts. I was also, however, driven by this to examine myself, in the passing anxiety that there might be something very wrong with my own classroom presentations.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But I am on the edge of giving a false impression. UCLA has many remarkable undergraduates, drawn largely from the Los Angeles area. During my years there I have had dozens of students who would have performed brilliantly anywhere. One of them is just completing a doctoral thesis with me on class and office in Renaissance Venice—and she is also perfectly capable of lecturing on Venetian painting. About eight years ago I had another extremely able student—actually an English major who did some directed reading with me. He wrote five or six essays—one of which was on Georg Lukács's notoriously obscure *History and Class Consciousness*—and each was a delight to read: subtle, cogent, beautifully turned. Later I was appalled when he told me that he had no desire to do graduate study. Then he seemed to disappear from sight, and I still wonder what became of him.

Since UCLA's establishment of an Honors Collegium, and now that the University of California proposes a serious rise in standards, we are promised a larger share of better students. The Collegium—a foil for the remedial programs on campus—is catering frankly to an intellectual elite. It prescribes small classes, favors an interdisciplinary approach, expects its students to write extensively, and enlists only those faculty members who show interest in the program. Last year I offered a freshman honors colloquium in historiography and was suddenly projected back to my Reed experiences: I was able to work up keen discussion and a group commitment to ideas.

On the subject of teaching, one major difference between Reed and UCLA remains to be noted. The Portland campus had no graduate study in history, and this is still the case. This should be seen perhaps as a disadvantage from the standpoint of historians who thrive on writing history and are enlivened by working with graduate students along the front lines of research. But there can be no single view on this. Some of the most productive historians—for instance, Eugen Weber at UCLA—prefer undergraduate teaching.

With human resources ample enough to populate a city-state, UCLA could be a close community with a strong esprit de corps. Yet it is not, primarily because students, staff, and faculty are commuters for the most part. Many live from ten to forty miles away and, to avoid heavy traffic, tend to flee from campus as soon as possible. UCLA is a place of work and study, not a community for living; life takes place elsewhere. On many weekends and all holidays the campus is desolately empty. At dusk or after dark, in the lighted spaces appointed for rows of food machines, the occasional figure seen huddled over a coffee is likely to enhance the melancholy.

I sometimes ask students, "Well, how is it to be in school here? It must be very easy to make friends." "No," they reply, "not easy. But

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

maybe it's just me," meaning that the institution is not to be blamed for any social failures on campus. Like other metropolitan universities, UCLA has large numbers of lonely students; not all of them cluster into the Greek, professional, ethnic, religious, political, and agitprop societies. One rather noticeable thing on campus, in this connection, is the way in which students of the same ethnic or religious background are often to be seen walking together between classes. Perhaps nothing should be made of this, but it may be pertinent to add that the walls in many of the men's toilets on campus are very often scratched with virulent racist graffiti against Arabs, Iranians, blacks, Jews, Mexicans, Orientals, and whites. Homosexuals and even the poor and unemployed also came in for their allotment of literary lynching. Higher learning, passion-free inquiry, and the exercise of reason are, presto, cast to the dogs, and I sometimes wonder if any of those strange faces in my large lecture courses are capable of producing the squalid venom that goes up on those walls. Surely, I ruminate, my impractical subjects—Renaissance Italy and Tudor and Stuart England—hold no appeal for the murderously angry?

Pressed to do a reckoning, I shall draw up a divided balance sheet. I am at home in UCLA's anonymity: the cosmopolitan spaces, the huge faculty, the mass of students, the mammoth parking structures, and the freedom to pretend that administrators—"chairpersons" aside—are without faces because one need not meet them. But all this is enjoyed, I know, at the cost of a rarefied collegiality, a continuous rain of bureaucratic memoranda, and a campus that turns into a ghostly city in its deserted moments.

If my son were not at an English university, I would have wanted him to attend Reed because it provides a superior education and individual care. Scholarly and scientific intelligence is not wholly collected at the great universities, and the smaller colleges can be stimulating milieus when they develop as intellectual enclaves. In the course of my committee work at UCLA, I have seen promotions to professorships secured not by merit of publication or teaching but by the force of friendships, pity, flattery, ethnic background, zeal in committee work, and inattention on the part of administrators. As a result, when I hear our poorer students sharply condemned, I only need think of our assorted faculty to decide that we probably have the students we deserve.

Every evening, when I am in Los Angeles, I walk up to the high ground of UCLA's great outdoor swimming pool to swim some 1600 to 2000 meters. This workout, usually done alongside two or three off-campus acquaintances, concludes my day. All failures and frustrations wash away, freeing me to be at peace with the world and myself, and to acknowledge, without clause or quibble, the University of California's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

truly remarkable resources. My department's liberal policy on leave allowed me—and made it sensible—to acquire a house in London fourteen years ago. Departmental tolerance has also permitted five or six of us to sidestep into new fields. (For the past six years I have been doing a course of lectures on Renaissance England. I continue to teach the Italian Renaissance, but my current research has taken me back to a first love—Elizabethan, Jacobean, and Caroline poetry.)

Reed taught me what teaching is and what it ought to be. I owe it my sense of security as a teacher. The aims and resources of the Los Angeles campus, however, enable its faculty to renew itself. Time and funds are offered us—competitively, of course—for travel, research, and writing. We are prompted to pursue scholarship and publication by the university's official policies on advancement and promotion. The advantage in this for students is a faculty which, in constantly renewing itself, returns to teaching refreshed and excited, and students know very well how to respond to this. It seems to me that one of the more depressing sights in the academic profession is the scholar who has lost all active interest in scholarship (and it can happen in one's thirties) but who must go on making believe that the spirit still lives.

Writing this piece in London, far from my two teaching sites, I have tried for detachment but know that return trips to one's youth attract the sly company of nostalgia and idealization. Have I idealized Reed? Not in the essential matter—Humanities 11, the wealth and scope of which kept students and faculty alert, stretched, challenged, and interested. The more I think about that course, the more I see that the model for student and scholar should lie in the pursuit of intellectual diversity. If long-term or excessive specialization be the desired end, it is not enough to seek an ideal union of the best features of Reed and UCLA: dedicated teaching and a strong commitment to scholarship. Something vital will be missing still. I have seen too many scholars and teachers spend too many years thinking about the same things. They end by going round in circles.

In a world of profoundly troubled economies, my emphasis on intellectual diversity will seem a dalliance. I recognize the compelling importance of careers, specialization, and trade-school mentalities. But there is a principle of balance at stake. We cannot allow learning in higher education to be made so utterly utilitarian that our human result is someone who can read well, and therefore function intellectually, only in a very restricted sphere.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Rain of the Waldensians

(for my grandmother, née Elizabeth Tilney, and for my wife)

Brian Swann

Late rain, humble,
devoted to the quiet virtues;
rain, falling as it wills,
on the Bird Goddess, on
St. Kevin hatching a nest of blackbirds
in his hand, on sounds that echo
like the bell in which Modomnoc
carried bees across the pure-colored sea
in a small boat sailing from the east.
This rain
in plain dress cherishes the hidden seed:
earnest and humble craftsfolk
about to stir their pale shoulders,
transform themselves and all around,
turn inside-out to form
the coming reformation.
But all about me
objects are silent and alone.
Silence is the objects' speech.
Mine too. From the blackness
rain's attracted to my light, its songs
adagio, andante, crescendo,
diminuendo to the voice
of things extinct.
It rains *en corniche.*
Whole fronts. It rains my Huguenot

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

great-grandmother from Cévennes: part
of "the execrable race of the ancient
Albigensians" (Clement XI). It rains
those weavers, their caged birds
and window boxes, Friendly Societies
and flower shows.
An old lady
watches drops slip off the ends
of mulberry leaves onto beans rising
from underwater to send out tentacles.
Some, she sees, find nothing to grasp, and
curl in on themselves. Some touch wire,
stick, and climb. Others ascend themselves,
or, in mutual aid, bridge synapses,
fingers bunched. The whole group
is a nerve until they flower,
and then, she says, "the fingers breathe."
She calls the cat. He comes home late,
splashing along the stream
like a small boy.

BRIAN SWANN is professor of English at The Cooper Union. His most recent book of poems is *The Middle of the Journey*, and in 1983 he edited *Smoothing the Ground: Essays on Native American Oral Literature*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Winslow Homer: Prout's Neck, Maine

EDWARD BYRNE

In the blackness of pre-dawn he is there
waiting for the shoreline to open itself
like a familiar map unrolled for inspection.
He watches as the sky lightens a bit
and feels a warmth enter the shifting winds.
For weeks now he's prepared for this one moment,

for the soft orange glow about to flow
over the eastern edge of Cape Elizabeth.
Already he's filled most of his canvas:
the smudged shadow of a far-off schooner,
a doryman hauling halibut, and the green-water
Atlantic—all below a blank sky, the unfinished

element. And yet he knows that somewhere
long past the last darkening of headland
where a bare promontory projects into the sea,
in a lone boat sailing under mid-morning fog,
is a fisherman busy with his own solitary work
who has witnessed this scene many times before.

EDWARD BYRNE is a professor of English at Valparaiso University. He is the author of *Along the Dark Shore*, a book of poems.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Women in Greek Myth

MARY R. LEFKOWITZ

THE GREEKS' MOST IMPORTANT LEGACY is not, as we would like to think, democracy; it is their mythology. Even though in the second century A.D. a mysterious voice was heard exclaiming "great Pan is dead," the Greek gods and many obscure and irrational stories about them lived on in the imaginations of artists and writers, no matter how often or in how many different ways Christians and philosophers tried to dismiss the myths as frivolous or harmful. And even in the twentieth century, when man has acquired greater power than ever before to alter the natural world, the old myths continue to haunt us, not just in the form of nymphs and shepherds on vases or garden statuary, but in many common assumptions about the shape of human experience. The notions—now presumably obsolete—that a man should be active and aggressive, a woman passive and subject to control by the men in her family, are expressed in virtually every Greek myth, even the ones in which the women seek to gain control of their own lives. That the most important phase of a woman's life is the period immediately preceding her marriage (or remarriage) is preserved in the plot of many novels, as is the notion that virginity, or at least celibacy, offers a woman a kind of freedom that she is no longer entitled to when she becomes involved with a man.

Here I intend to describe how the Greeks portrayed female experience in myth. I also want to suggest why, in the hands of the great poets, the portrayal of women was not as restrictive as I have made it sound. The Greeks at least attributed to women a capacity for understanding not found in the other great mythological tradition that has influenced us—namely, the Old and New Testaments. One reason the Greeks receive too little credit for their relatively balanced view of women's abilities is that most of us encounter Greek mythology only in a condensed and filtered form, usually in a translation of some work of literature, but more often as stories retold in a modern handbook. Inevitably, in the process of condensation and translation, the original meaning can easily get lost.

MARY R. LEFKOWITZ, Andrew W. Mellon Professor in the Humanities at Wellesley College, is co-editor of *Women's Life in Greece and Rome.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But Edith Hamilton and D'Aulaire have done far less damage to the intended meaning of the myths than psychiatric theory or, more recently, feminist theory.

Psychologists tend to assume that human nature has for all time remained basically the same. They therefore conclude that the ancients were preoccupied with much the same problems that we are, namely, sex and the definition and role of the sexes. But it is another question whether the ancients themselves would have understood or accepted interpretations that place such disproportionate emphasis on desire and incest. The text of Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* gives no indication that Oedipus was sexually attracted to Jocasta; he married her because marriage to the king's widow was the reward for ridding Thebes of the Sphinx. Similarly, I think, Thyestes does not have intercourse with his daughter because he is in love with her but because the Delphic oracle told him that the son born from this union would take revenge on Thyestes' brother, Atreus, for murdering Thyestes' other children. The son, Aegisthus, seduces Clytemnestra and murders Atreus's son, Agamemnon, and so reclaims his father's kingdom. In each generation, inheritance and power were more compelling motives than sex.

Feminists tend to reject the psychologists' premise that man's preoccupations have not changed over time, and prefer instead to discover in the myths evidence of the persistent limitations of human imagination. In particular, the myths have a tendency to portray polar opposites and to organize experience into restricted channels, much in the same way as a language forbids some grammatical usages in favor of others that are inherently no more worthy than those it has excluded. Page DuBois has recently argued in *Centaurs and Amazons* that Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* is primarily concerned with incest, or at least with an excessive endogamy that ends in sterility and the extinction of his family. It is true that Oedipus's sons Eteocles and Polynices kill each other in combat and that his daughter Antigone dies because she seeks, against her uncle Creon's orders, to bury her brother Polynices' body. But in the *Antigone* Sophocles speaks only about the inexorable progress of the family curse, from which no generation can free itself and which he calls "folly in speech and a fury in the mind." In other words, where modern critics emphasize either sexual or social issues, the poet himself speaks of *perceptual* and *ethical* problems: will man know what is right, and even if he does, will he do it? Sophocles' answer is unequivocally negative:

> Hope in its many wanderings is a help to some men, but to others it is the deception that comes from vain passions. It comes on a man who knows nothing until he burns his foot in the hot fire. In wisdom once—from some unknown person—a famous statement came to light: "evil seems good to the person whose

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wits the god is leading toward delusion (*ate*); he acts only for the shortest time apart from delusion."

The chorus does not say specifically that these lines apply to any particular character in the play, but since it is talking about the house of Oedipus, it is natural to assume that it has Antigone in mind, though it soon turns out that the chorus's words apply equally well to Creon, the king who has condemned Antigone to death for trying to bury her brother against his orders. Creon's decision will cause the death of his family as well. The point is that, at least as far as the Greeks were concerned, the human condition—not gender—causes problems that both men and women are bound to experience, especially when they try to accomplish something out of the ordinary.

I wish to suggest that it may not be profitable to regard the myths as a kind of code that could be reliably deciphered were we to apply the right modern methodology. Whatever the story of Oedipus may have meant when it was first told (whenever that was), by the time the poems of Homer were composed, it and virtually every other myth were presumed to belong to a distant past. The myths had become a kind of history, and they were retold both for entertainment and for instruction, often with the conclusion first (since everyone knew how the story would end). Even an extraordinarily long narrative like the *Odyssey* begins by stating that Odysseus returned home after wandering and learning much, but having lost his companions because of their own folly. Modern critics may discern in Odysseus's adventures a covert description of the development of the human psyche, but the Greeks themselves understood it first as a moral tale, where the evil suitors were defeated by the courage and intelligence not only of Odysseus but also of his wife Penelope, to whom—in spite of an offer of immortality from the goddess Calypso—he was eager to return.

What would ancient Greek women have thought about Greek mythology? The ancients tell us very little about their education. In general, we only know what male writers tell us about what women thought, because there are so few women writers. But certainly everyone, men and women, free and enslaved, knew the stories. In Euripides' *Ion*, a group of slave women who had been brought to Delphi eagerly identify in the temple of Apollo the representations of gods, heroes, and monsters that they recognized from stories that were told to them as they worked at their looms. It is unlikely that women, at least in the fifth century, attended the theater. But I doubt in any case that women (or men) regarded the stories of Oedipus and Jocasta or Agamemnon and Clytemnestra as "norms," since the stories belonged to a heroic past that no longer existed.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The myths did, however, place emphasis on the kind of experiences and problems—although in idealized or exaggerated forms—that most ancient women encountered in the course of their lives. In myth, there were essentially two main courses of female existence: celibacy or involvement with males and (inevitably) childbearing. The two paths were of course mutually exclusive, though a woman (or goddess) could return to celibacy after her children were born. For mortal women, involvement with males was the more usual and probably the more promising alternative, since virginity offered freedom only to goddesses like Athena and Artemis, who as goddesses had the power to defend themselves and by definition were ageless and immortal. Virgin goddesses who remained fixed in one place, like Hestia and Hecate, were guaranteed protection and honor by Zeus. Other goddesses who had been wives or lovers of the gods could gain power temporarily by withdrawing from the males and by withholding something essential to men or to the gods. Demeter, for example, long since estranged from Zeus, won back her daughter Persephone from Hades by keeping the seeds of grain within the earth so that humans began to starve and the gods received no sacrifices. But to mortal women, who by definition as humans can be destroyed and will grow old, disengagement offered fewer rewards and posed greater dangers. Daphne refused to have sexual relations with Apollo and ended up fixed in one place—as a laurel tree. Only in one respect—the dependence on males—does the existence of the virgin goddesses correspond to that of mortal women. Although the virgin goddesses were worshiped for their power over so many aspects of human life, they acted only within limits defined by Zeus and with his approval, or with the cooperation of another god. Hesiod, in a passage that describes and virtually advertises a local cult, explains how Zeus honors the virgin goddess Hecate beyond all others and gave her shining gifts. Zeus permits her to help or hinder kings, soldiers in battle, or athletes in competition; with Poseidon she can help the fisherman, and with Hermes she can aid the herdsman.

The great majority of myths about goddesses or women concentrate on their relations with males, particularly the first union with a male, which, in the case of ordinary mortals at least, was marriage. The great epic about the origin of the gods, Hesiod's *Theogony,* is a chronological catalogue of divine unions, in which the virgin goddesses, like Hecate and Athena, appear as rare exceptions; virtually every other goddess is the mother of children. Earth, who with her husband, Heaven, is the ancestress of Zeus and the most important gods and many primeval forces, asks her son Cronus to castrate his father because he hides all his children back in Earth as soon as they are born, and she "groans because she is oppressed." But Cronus, too, swallows his children as soon as they

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

are born. His wife Rhea has to devise a means of keeping one son, Zeus, away from him so that Zeus can drive Cronus out of power by force and rule over the gods himself. But Zeus prevents a recurrence of this cycle by having several wives. He swallows Metis, his first wife, so that he could bear Athena himself from his own head, and thus keep her and her mother under his control. Zeus has six other wives, the last of whom is Hera, and he has many temporary liaisons with both goddesses and women. Thus a patriarchal order is established, with both women and children kept subordinate, although with particular rights and responsibilities.

Hesiod doesn't say how Zeus tricked Metis into letting him swallow her or what she might have said when she discovered that she had been tricked. But Homer, in the first book of the *Iliad*, makes it clear that Hera very much resents Zeus's granting favors to other goddesses and opposing her plans without consulting her. Hesiod, in the *Theogony*, says nothing about the fate of the mortal women, Semele and Alcmene, with whom Zeus had relations, but later poets speak poignantly about the perils and pleasures of intercourse with a god. Perhaps the most vivid description of a union of this type is spoken by Creusa in Euripides' *Ion*. Apollo had fallen in love with Creusa, but he immediately abandoned her; years later, as queen of Athens, unable to bear another child, she complains that she can neither ask for the god's help nor tell her story because even associating with a woman who bore a bastard child might disgrace her. Like Persephone when she was carried off to the Lower World by Hades, or like Europa when she was approached by a beautiful white bull who later turned out to be the god Zeus, Creusa was gathering flowers when Apollo—his hair glittering with gold—drew her into a cave, as she cried out in vain to her mother:

> You brought me there in shamelessness as a favour to the Goddess of Love. And I in my misfortune bore you a son, and in fear of my mother I left him in the couch where you compelled me, in misfortune, in my sorrow, on a bed of sorrow.

When she speaks these lines she is angry at the god, who has—as she believes—both abandoned her and failed to protect their son. Only after she attempts and fails to kill him does she discover that the boy her husband thought to be his son is, in fact, her and Apollo's lost child, who is destined to be king of Athens. Similarly, in *Prometheus Bound*, the chorus hears the story of Io's involvement with Zeus and sees her head horned like a cow's. After listening to her hysterical ravings, the female chorus exclaims that they would not want to "marry" one of the gods:

> Let my marriage be humble, may the passion of the powerful gods not cast on me an eye none can escape; that is a war I could not fight, a source of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

resourcelessness. I do not know who I would become. For I do not see how I could escape the mind of Zeus.

Their words make it clear that they are afraid not only of the gods' power but of the physical changes in themselves that sexual union with a god might cause. Ancient medical treatises confirm that girls in the first stages of puberty (the time when they would ordinarily be married off) became hysterical and suicidal, like Io; the prescription and cure for them, as it was for her, is pregnancy. Also, neither Io nor the chorus can see that for her, as for Creusa, what she presumes to be misfortune will ultimately bring her fame and happiness: the birth of a son who will be the ancestor of a famous race and whose descendants will include another son of Zeus, Heracles.

Like Antigone, Io and Creusa are victims of *ate*, "folly of speech and a fury in the mind," because they do not understand the consequences of their actions, and they fear as disaster what will ultimately bring them fame and guarantee them a place in history. Judged by standards of what Christianity promises to the good, at least after the Day of Judgment, the Greek reward for endurance may seem slight indeed. But in Greek religion no human being, male or female, could live entirely without sorrow; from Zeus's two jars of good and of evil, a person can get either a mixed portion or *all evil*, but there is no possibility of *all good*. For a woman the best available "mixture" would seem to be marriage—however temporary—and family, particularly if her children are heroes or the mothers of great men.

Perhaps because the life of any human being was perceived as essentially temporary and fragile, the myths tend to emphasize the continuity, not just of families, but of whole peoples. Creusa's son by Apollo is Ion, ancestor not only of the Athenians but of the Ionians in Asia Minor. Virtually every village and town claimed descent from a god, often through a hero for whom the town was named. The Ionians, for example, were said to have been named after Ion. Hesiod's *Theogony* ends with a long catalogue of marriages and extramarital unions between gods and goddesses, gods and women, and goddesses and men, all of which resulted in the birth of gods, goddesses, heroes, and women who married heroes. Another epic attributed to Hesiod, *The Catalogue of Women*, described the unions that produced all the famous heroes, nations, and races; each new heroine was introduced with the words "And like her was. . . ."

For centuries, only short quotations from the *Catalogue* survived and some prose summaries that could give but little impression of the shape of the original epic; but in this century a number of long fragments were discovered on tattered strips of papyrus, and from these we can get at

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

least a partial sense of the pacing and emphasis of the original narrative. Although Greek bards could describe brilliantly the excitement of sexual passion and the verbal and physical prelude to making love—the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* is the best example—the *Catalogue of Women* seems to have been valued, and recited, even in the Hellenistic Age, not for its power to engage the emotions, but as historical information, like the *begats* in Genesis or at the beginning of Matthew, or the fascinating list of the different types of whales that interrupts the grim story of Melville's *Moby-Dick*. The ancient Greeks seem to have been particularly fond of such catalogues—book 2 of the *Iliad* contains a list of all the cities that sent ships and men to Troy—and they attribute to women a significant role in this formal history. Each "founding mother" is listed by name; none is merely an anonymous bearer of divine seed.

Like the *Theogony*, the *Catalogue* is organized by genealogies, and within each family tree Hesiod concentrates on explaining why certain women captured the attention of gods or of heroes. In the first book Demodike (about whom virtually nothing is said in any other surviving text) is wooed by numerous suitors, as were Helen and Penelope, because of her "unbounded beauty, but they didn't persuade her." She held out, apparently, for a god instead. Ares, by whom she became the mother of Thestius, was the father of Leda, who in turn was the mother of the most beautiful woman in the world, Helen. Mestra, daughter of Erysichthon, who had an insatiable appetite, was able to change into every type of animal; each day her father sold her in exchange for food, and each night she changed back into human shape and returned to him. Finally, Sisyphus bought her for his son and demanded arbitration when she ran away. But even then, Sisyphus wasn't able to keep her, because "Poseidon broke her [*edamassato*, the same verb denotes both taming of animals and the taking of a virgin], far away from her father in sea-girt Cos, carrying her across the wine-faced sea, even though she was very clever" [*polyidris*, a term that always seems to imply, both for men and for women, that one is tricky, or too clever for one's own good]. By Poseidon, Mestra became the mother of the great hero Bellerophontes. Another fragment describes the contest for the athletic and beautiful Atalanta from the point of view of her successful suitor, Hippomenes: "The prize that awaited them both was not the same; swift-footed god-like Atalanta raced refusing the gifts of golden Aphrodite; for him the race was for his life, whether he should be captured [by Atalanta's father] or escape; and so he addressed her with crafty intention, 'daughter of Schoeneus, with your relentless heart, accept these shining gifts of golden Aphrodite.' " He threw an apple on the ground, "and she snatched it swiftly like a Harpy on delaying feet; but he threw a second apple to the ground . . . then swift god-like Atalanta had two apples, and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

she was near the goal, but he threw a third to the ground, and with this he escaped death and dark fate. He stood there catching his breath."

In this and every other case, the males win, which could be interpreted as an illustration of the inferiority of women, were no struggle to capture them involved. In Atalanta's case, the women's skill is quite obviously superior. The mother of a hero clearly must be more beautiful than other women, but she must also be more clever or swift than most men and, in the end, can be subdued only by or with the assistance of the gods. Perhaps the best example is Alcmena, the mother of Heracles, the greatest hero of all. Her brothers were all killed, and she "alone was left as a joy to her parents"—after which, immediately, the next lines refer to Zeus, who wanted Alcmena to be the mother of his greatest mortal son, Heracles. According to the epic the *Shield of Heracles*—another work attributed to Hesiod but probably composed at least a century later than the *Catalogue of Women*—Alcmena was more beautiful, more clever, and (in our terms) sexier than anyone. She was also so faithful that on her wedding night Zeus had to pretend that he was her husband. That occasion had been postponed until Amphitryon had avenged the death of Alcmena's brothers, but "when [Amphitryon] had accomplished the great deed he returned to his home, and he did not go to his slaves or the shepherds in the fields until he had gone up to his wife's bed—such great desire ruled the heart of the leader of the army; and he lay with his wife all night rejoicing in the gifts of golden Aphrodite." This should be noted, lest anyone argue that Greek men had all their sexual pleasure in extramarital or homosexual relationships.

The moral superiority of women like Alcmena is significant, because the heroic age is brought to an end by the three daughters of Tyndareus, "twice and thrice married and leavers of husbands": Timandre who left her husband Echemus for Phyleus, Clytemnestra who "after she deserted her husband Agamemnon slept with Aegisthus and chose a worse husband, and then Helen disgraced the bed of fair-haired Menelaus." It is important to note that Helen, unlike Atalanta, is won not by the most daring man but by the one who offered the most gifts, and one who was not even present himself but rather was represented by his brother; the poet observes that "Menelaus could not have won Helen nor would any other mortal suitor, if swift Achilles returning home from Pelion had encountered her when she was a girl; but before that warlike Menelaus had her, and she bore fair-ankled Hermione in his halls—though the birth had been despaired of" (*aelpton*). At this point the gods were divided by strife, and Zeus wanted to destroy the race of men. The Trojan War followed and, with it, a kind of *Heldendämmerung:* apparently, the race of heroes cannot exist without women of heroic caliber.

Since Greek myth glorified the role of mother, it also tended to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

condemn to infamy those who in some way rebelled against it. A confirmed mortal virgin who resisted the advances of a god might be punished simply by metamorphosis into a tree or flower. But women who consciously denied their femininity, like the Amazons, or ones who killed their husbands and fathers, like the women of Lemnos, were regarded as enemies and monsters. The expected outcome of any sexual encounter between a mortal woman and a god was a notable child—as Poseidon reassures Tyro both in the *Odyssey* and in Hesiod's *Catalogue:* "You will bear glorious children, since the embraces of a god are not fruitless." But in the *Catalogue*, when Poseidon had intercourse with the daughter of Elatus, king of the Lapiths in Thessaly, and promised to grant her any favor she wished, she asked to be turned into a man and made invulnerable. This man, Caineus, proved to be a threat to the gods because he did not respect the limitations of mortality, like Ixion, who tried to seduce Hera, or like Tantalus, who stole nectar and ambrosia from the gods to try to make his friends immortal. Caineus instead set up his spear in the marketplace and asked people to worship it; so Zeus arranged to have the Centaurs drive Caineus into the ground.

According to the prose genealogy of Acusilaus, Poseidon allowed the sex change of Caineus because "it wasn't holy for them to have children by him or by anyone else." Compare the story of Thetis, whose son was destined to be greater than his father and who was therefore married to a mortal man, or the story of Metis, whom Zeus swallowed in order to produce her offspring Athena from his own head. The notion seems to be that by completely preventing rather than somehow mitigating the outcome of her pregnancy, Poseidon makes Caineus dangerous and undesirable. Coronis, who has intercourse with another of Elatus's sons, Ischys, while she was pregnant with Apollo's son, is allowed to die, but the child Asclepius is saved only to be killed when he too oversteps mortal boundaries. Medea, who kills her children to take revenge on their father, Jason, who has deserted her, gets away with her life, but she knows she will live unhappily ever after. Clytemnestra, who helped to murder her husband, Agamemnon, in order to live with her lover Aegisthus, is murdered by Orestes, her son by Agamemnon. Throughout the *Odyssey* Clytemnestra's evil actions are contrasted with those of the faithful Penelope. Modern feminists may admire these destructive women because they took action and used their great intelligence to right what they considered to be personal wrongs against themselves. But even the chorus of Corinthian women, who at first sympathize with Medea's desire to punish Jason for deserting her, condemn the form that her revenge takes.

Even though so few options in life seem to have been available to Greek women (or men), the Greeks did not hesitate to give "equal time"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to descriptions of the problems of human existence from a woman's point of view. We can tell from the titles of lost plays that women were the central figures of many tragedies, as they are in the ones that have come down to us. The poets, even though they were men, and their plays, even though they were performed by male actors, allow female characters to describe their predicaments in detail. It is as if the actors had listened with a sympathetic ear to the complaints of women in their own families. Euripides shows with particular clarity how the conditions of ancient marriage could be both restrictive and frustrating. As Medea says, when a man is bored with his family, he can go out and put an end to his heartache, but a woman must stay behind, inside the house, and "look towards him alone." Phaedra complains of the aristocratic wife's problem of having too much time on her hands to think. She cannot even have the man she loves because adultery would bring disgrace not only to her but to her children. Sophocles depicts the plight of Heracles' wife Deianira no less sympathetically. She is abandoned year after year by her husband as he goes about his labors and sleeps with other women. Heracles sees his children "like a farmer who sees a distant field only at sowing-time and harvest." In a fragment of Sophocles' lost play *Tereus,* the king's deserted wife complains that women are happy only in girlhood, in their father's house, after which they are "thrust out and sold" to strangers or foreigners, in joyless or hostile houses, "—and all this once the first night has yoked us to our husband we are forced to praise and say that all is well." Sophocles' and Euripides' dramas were often produced in competition with one another, so throughout the last decades of the fifth century (from the beginning until the disastrous end of the Peloponnesian War), Athenian men who comprised the audiences were compelled to reflect on how their customs and actions affected (or afflicted) women's lives.

It has recently been suggested both by Freudian and feminist critics that the destruction of Athenian society was predicted in dramas like Euripides' *Bacchae,* which describes how Pentheus, the king of Thebes, is murdered by his mother in a Bacchic frenzy. The Greeks' habitual misogyny, it is suggested, compelled them to seek the company and love of other men and to restrict and repress the females in their family. Euripides, it would then seem, is saying that women are confined to "the loom and the shuttle" inside their houses. Pentheus's cruel death and the disgrace and exile of his mother are particularly vivid reminders of the universal power of *ate.* The deception that leads men to ignore the worship of the gods (and of the vital forces in nature that the gods represent) and the "folly in speech and fury in the mind" will drive men to bring about their own destruction. Pentheus, his mother, and his aunts refused to recognize the existence of the god Dionysus, so the god whom

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

they dishonor causes them all to go mad and ultimately to destroy themselves. As in the *Antigone*, both men and women are equally subject to *ate*, and both are equally responsible for their actions. When Euripides suggests that, if the women abandon their homes and infant children and the responsibility of caring for the family that is represented by the loom, they will harm not only others but themselves, he is recommending, not that women enjoy the role society has assigned to them, but simply that women accept that role as the least destructive possibility. Men, too, are compelled to play roles that they would not willingly choose. For example, Cadmus, Pentheus's grandfather, had to abdicate his throne when he was too old to defend himself. He was forced to pretend that he was young again in the ritual required by the god. At the end of the play, he is but an old man who has done nothing himself to offend the god, but he nonetheless must leave the city he founded and end his days in the form of a snake.

Rather than claim that Greek men were misogynists because they did not give women "equal rights"—rights that women have yet to acquire even in the most advanced democracies of this century—I would suggest that they be regarded as pioneers. Greek men recognized and described with sympathy both the life and the central importance to their society of women. Women, to whom society assigned the task of lamenting and burying the dead, are very often the last commentators on the war or murders described in an epic or a drama, and male poets did not hesitate to allow them to make articulate and poignant observations about the futility of all that their men had prized so highly. Women assume an important role in drama because they are passive and required to remain at home or away from the scene of the action, as natural victims, and thus they are able to represent the human condition in general, and man's true powerlessness before the gods and the fact of his own mortality.

Even though male Greek writers of the fifth century created brilliant descriptions of the problems of women's lives, they were not equally good at offering solutions. Even the philosophers of the fourth century were better at explaining how the world worked than at proposing any *practical* change. In the Hellenistic period, when the Macedonian conquests had imposed more efficient governance and caused Greek culture to come in contact with new ideas, the law, centuries behind the facts as always, granted women in name some of the rights they had already had in practice. Despite greater physical comfort and freedom of movement, women had the same basic role in life, and the old myths continued to be told and retold, even by the best and most sophisticated court poets in Alexandria. Medea, in Apollonius's epic *The Voyage of the Argo,* has the run of the palace, and with her handmaids, the city of Colchis; but she is still dependent on her father and, later on, her lover

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Jason. The destructive powers of Medea's magic and her selfish desires lead to her exile, the death of her brother, and the unhappiness of both Jason and herself.

At least by stressing the importance of the family and of women's role within it as nurturers and continuers of the race, the Greeks attributed to women a vital function that the Church fathers were later to try to deny them when they placed an even higher value on celibacy and offered virgins a new subservience rather than an increased independence. Comparison with narratives about women in the early church reveals that the Greeks—however immoral their tales from the point of view of Christian ethics—at least placed a higher value on women's initiative and intelligence. In the Gospel of Luke, Mary is chosen to be the mother of God's son because she is a virgin and thus fulfills the prophecy in Isaiah 7:14: "Behold the maiden [*parthenos*] shall conceive in her womb and she shall bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel." We hear nothing about her other qualities, though she does, in the course of the narrative, display both piety and common sense: "How can this be," she asks, "since I know no man?" The sexual encounter that invariably marks the culmination of the episodes in Hesiod's *Catalogue* is of course missing in the Gospel of Luke 1:35–37: "The Holy Spirit will come to you and the power of the highest will overshadow you." The incident emphasizes instead the power of God: "and behold, Elizabeth your kinswoman, she has also conceived a son, in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who had been called barren." Here the angel cites Genesis 18:14—"because nothing at all will be impossible for God." In Greek mythology gods choose women because of their distinguished genealogy—Io, for example, was the daughter of the river Inachus—or for their beauty—for example Cassandra, who, because of her ability to prophesy accurately, was the "most beautiful of Priam's daughters"—or for their courage—Apollo sees Cyrene wrestling alone with a lion—or for their intelligence—Poseidon finally outwitted the "very clever" Mestra.

Of course I do not mean in any way to deny that from a modern point of view women's experience as described in Greek myth is severely limited. We cannot really blame the Greeks for not having been able to envisage the advantages for women that the industrial and scientific revolutions would bring. At the same time it would be foolish to claim that the traditional roles of women in Greek myths have lost all their influence or even appeal. If feminists now seek to concentrate instead on those relatively few myths and authors whose heroines assert themselves, even if only to hasten their own or another's death, that is to be expected and possibly even applauded. But at the same time I would like to stress that the original myths, with their original emphases, also

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

have something to teach us; *ate* is still with us, and perhaps nowhere more obviously than in the belief that the ambitious career woman can "have it all," without divine intervention, or at least without the creation of new narrative patterns to help chart some of the crises, other than marriage and childbearing, that may arrive as the result of a longer, more complex life. In addition to reminding us of the limits of human vision, the ancient texts also emphasize the importance of "nature" as opposed to "nurture" in human life. In their concentration on certain critical moments, the myths also suggest that in some respects human existence is perceived episodically, even though it is lived chronologically. But perhaps the most important notion that Greek mythology has helped fix in our minds is that women have not only the right but the power to comment on the events that shape their lives, even if they cannot control them; and because they have a voice, women are able to speak not only for themselves, but for humankind in general.

William A. Shimer

1894–1983

Editor, THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, *1932–1943*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Weather Report

(for Archie Ammons)

SUSAN REA

Those mornings the others slept, you and I
would pass each other on the road
before the air had dried,
night still thick in the cornfields,
the blue mountains beginning
their long climb out of the mist.
I watched you walk, head tilted toward a thrush
somewhere in the row of southern pine,
and once I followed you
so near the space where your shadow
would seep up out of the ground
I might have walked inside your thoughts,
but I still was never sure
where you were coming back from.
We paused at meeting, nodded ceremoniously,
discussed the possibilities of rain—
you, never saying what you drew
out of the day's first clarity, and I,
too timid to describe your poems' delicate descent
into my life, unexpected
as the storm of moths that blew one day
over the catalpa tree. Years later, thinking
of the white phonemes of the yucca plants,
the pearl-gray gravel crackling underfoot,
the lucid morning sky we divided
between us, I want you to know I rarely
talk to anyone about the weather.

SUSAN REA, a new contributor, is a graduate of the FMA Writing Program at Goddard College.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MEMOIR

F. R. Leavis

DAN JACOBSON

Since the death of F. R. Leavis in 1978, a number of books have been written about his work and about the influence he had as a critic, as a teacher, and as an editor, on English intellectual and literary life. Considering how many of his former students have become well-known writers of various kinds —there are poets, novelists, critics, and reviewers among them, not to speak of editors, teachers, and drama producers—and considering also how distinctive and idiosyncratic a personality he was, it is surprising that so few reminiscences of him have been published. I was never one of his students and met him once only—well, twice to be exact, at dinner one evening and at breakfast the next morning: a slender basis, indeed, on which to claim an acquaintance. Still, my memory of those occasions, and of what lay between them, is vivid enough.

So is my sense of why Leavis's work had meant as much to me as it had for several years before our meeting. His battles against "Bloomsbury" and "the London literary establishment" and "the world of the conventional academic careerist" are not what I am thinking of here; nor even do I have in mind his critical practice, compelling though much of it was, and its theoretical implications and presuppositions. (Contrary to what a later generation of self-aggrandizing literary theorists would maintain, and contrary to what Leavis himself sometimes asserted, his criticism was much concerned with theory—a theory of reading; a theory of tradition and history; a theory of the self as a delicate set or system of internal relationships between the ego or personality, which was fixed, known, habitual, enclosed in its operations, and the rest of one's being, which alone was capable of penetrating and being penetrated by the experience of others.) Beyond all this, what Leavis offered in his work to many of those who became attached to it—though I would not have been able to describe it in such terms then—was a sense of community they could not find elsewhere. It followed that he also offered them a version of political action, a substitute or alternative form of politics.

Again, some denials or cautions are necessary. In saying these things I am *not* referring merely to the fact that Leavis was famous for turning his students into his "disciples," though that was an important consequence of the way he went about his task. Nor am I thinking only of how melodramatically embattled was his critical position, with himself and his allies engaged in an ever-about-to-be-lost battle against every form of cultural and literary corruption, from the smallest (a dishonest review) to the largest (the very nature of industrial civilization). Nor am I alluding to the fact that, though he scorned the country's universities and literary organs as he had actually found them, he made the greatest possible claims for the subject he espoused, by insisting that the study of English literature should be considered the central, unifying discipline in what would otherwise be an irretrievably dispersed and fragmented culture.

No, there was something more at stake. Leavis was offering or postulating in his criticism a model or ideal community that anyone, any reader, could bring into existence without ever stirring from his room. Anyone who read a novel or a poem, and responded wholeheartedly to it, was in effect meeting the poet or

✪ DAN JACOBSON is a novelist born in South Africa but long resident in England. His books include *The Beginners*, *The Rape of Tamar*, and a study of the Bible entitled *The Story of the Stories: The Chosen People and Its God*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

novelist in a "place" that existed *for both of them*, for the writer as much as for the reader, nowhere but in the shared experience of the poem or novel. That meeting of writer and reader in the work constituted a community in itself: the primary community, as it were, of which a literature consisted. However, the coming into being of that primary community was itself the product as well as the living instance of a larger community: the community of writers and readers, past and present, whose joint endeavors and judgments constantly re-created the literary tradition as a whole. And that tradition—not seen as so many books or texts external to oneself, "out there," established a priori, but felt or experienced within the self, as part of one's own mind and, indeed, one's own body—that tradition was in turn both the product and the living instance of the society at large, of its language and history and its institutions, domestic and political alike. (Religious believers of all denominations will, I suspect, have no difficulty in finding analogies to the temporal or trans-temporal relationships I am trying to describe.) Hence, in Leavis's hands, such concepts as "the correction of taste," "the preservation of standards," and "the common pursuit of true judgment" involved issues that were deeper than politics or came prior to politics; the health of politics, of all social and economic developments, ultimately depended on such concepts, and on what they evinced, and not vice versa.

What, to speak purely for myself, could have suited me better? There I was, having sundered myself for many reasons from my native South Africa and its savage politics, not the least of those reasons being my inability to feel that I was part of any of the groups to whom the country belonged—not the whites, not the blacks, not the thin, drab layer of its intellectuals or would-be intellectuals, not the political radicals whose courage I admired but whose personalities as well as whose programs I was unable to give any credence to. And here I was in England, not all that long in England, with which I had no direct connection other than that provided by literature and by the random, belated, preposterous history of the last spasms of imperial expansion enacted by Cecil John Rhodes during his semi-private Scramble for Africa. And here was Dr. Leavis, in prose that reached again and again to the very heart of particular literary works, implicitly proposing an ideal community: a community that could be realized (if anywhere) only inside my own head, but that nevertheless felt more like a real community than any other I could imagine myself joining. It was as if "the Republic of Letters" (to use a phrase Leavis would probably have abominated) had been opened up or transformed into a homeland: a place in which I could be naturalized without seeking a license from any authority other than that of my own tastes and inclinations.

But what of the authority of the man who had made all this seem reasonable or plausible? We met on the staircase outside his rooms in Downing College, Cambridge. I had been brought there by the chairman of the college literary society. He had written to ask me to give a talk to his group; in the course of his letter he had said that Dr. Leavis would be glad to be my host at dinner before the meeting. Now this young man conferred briefly with Leavis about the arrangements and departed. A moment later we followed him, Leavis leading the way, into the court. It was quite dark. At intervals lights shone from windows onto a stone pathway that ran alongside the buildings, which were ranged at stern right angles to one another. The court was so wide and so open to the sky, the surface was just visible by its own light, that all the predinner comings and goings seemed bleak and desultory, rather than cozy. Leavis still walked slightly ahead of me. His gait was rapid, even impatient. We did not have far to go. We passed through another doorway, went up a few more stairs, and plunged into a room crowded with dons ritualistically but eagerly drinking their sherry. By that time I had been overcome by a most unexpected and inappropriate emotion. I felt a kind of protective zeal toward my host.

To protect *him?* From what? From himself, chiefly. He was much frailer than I had expected him to be. He was more tense. Above all, he was more childlike. Each of these qualities seemed to be inseparable from the others. He was childlike because he was so frail, frail because he was so tense, tense because he was as little capable as a child of distancing himself from what he felt about anything or restraining himself from uttering whatever happened to be in his mind. Within

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a few seconds of our meeting, he had told me that he was exhausted—exhausted—and then, touching his chest with his hand and looking at me with a triumphant slyness and earnestness, he said, "It's lucky for me I have a long-distance runner's heart." His hand was small, even delicate; it was also as brown and sinewy as everything else about him. The energy of his movements, of his gaze and of the carriage of his head, seemed to have nothing muscular about it; it seemed to be sustained solely by nerve and will and the appetite for combat that went with them. He was dressed in a khaki shirt, a reddish-brown tweed jacket, and a pair of gray flannel trousers. Around his neck, in honor of the formal dinner we were about to attend, was a crumpled tie; the collar button of his shirt, however, was undone. His face was small, brown, narrow-chinned, sharp-nosed, ill-shaven; it was dwarfed by its own brow, from beneath which a pair of almost bird-bright eyes peeped out. Lined and, for all its size, somehow crowded, his brow was not to be distinguished or separated from the scalp to which it was joined. It was the most complicated scalp I had ever seen: flecked, freckled, blotched, mottled, pitted, bumpy, bordered at the back and sides by a fringe of long, fine, unkempt, colorless hair.

On the pathway he told me twice again, without slackening his pace for a moment, how tired he was. On the stairway he told me that his grandfather had supported the Boer cause during the Anglo-Boer War, for which he had been pestered by children in the Cambridge streets, shouting "Kruger! Kruger!" as he went about his business. Once inside he introduced me to the Master of the college and then carefully instructed me as to what I should do when we were summoned to dinner: I was to fall into place immediately behind the Master and follow him into the hall; he, in turn, would be immediately behind me. A glass of sherry was put into my hand. With an air as energetic and peremptory as before, leaning forward not so much from his hips as from his knees, Leavis asked me if I had seen the editorial in the last issue of the *Times Literary Supplement*. (In those days the *TLS* actually had editorials, strange though it now seems to say so.) I said that I had. He then asked me if I had noticed the reference in it to his "critical technique." I said that I had. Leavis smiled like a child who knows and despises the tricks the adults get up to behind his back. "An insidious word—*technique*," he said, looking steadily at me. I was impressed by his command of tone and vocabulary, even while I registered how accurate were some mimickings of his voice and accent that I had heard from former students of his. Then we were interrupted by a young man wearing a clerical collar, who said, apropos of Leavis's standing for election as Professor of Poetry at Oxford, "I see ——— has thrown her hat into the ring, Dr. Leavis!" With no pretense at "good sportsmanship," and with no regard for the hearty amiability of his interlocutor, Leavis responded instantly and ferociously: "Yes—an insufferable woman!" The young man's face stiffened; then he broke into a giggle that was instantly quenched in his sherry glass.

There it was: this fiercely unguarded response affected me, much to my surprise, as if it were a display of some kind of vulnerability. I wanted to draw him aside and tell him that in life, in real life, one doesn't say that sort of thing over a glass of sherry to someone who was evidently not an intimate, in the presence of a complete stranger: least of all does one say it about a person with whom one is in competition for a post. In life, in my life, in the life of everyone else I knew, one guards oneself by guarding one's words; one exposes as little as possible of oneself to repudiation, retribution, or (perhaps worst of all) condescension. But not this man, evidently.

Despite his warning, I missed my cue when dinner was announced; whereupon Leavis took me urgently by the sleeve so that I might go ahead of him, in due order, as we trooped into the hall. I sat between him and the head of the college, who had one end of the table to himself. Across the table from me sat another guest, a high-court judge, whose name and face I have forgotten, but whose beautiful gray suit and stiff white collar still stick in my mind. I was seated with my back to the body of the hall and thus saw practically nothing of the students. No sooner had the meal begun than I realized that it was going to be like one in a fairy tale or moral fable. It wasn't that the dishes disappeared every time I reached toward them. They were there for me, all right. It was for my host that they did not exist. With grave courtesy the college servants poured wine for him, put the soup before him, an

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

entrée, the main course, the vegetables that accompanied it, the pudding. He touched none of them. Everyone around him, myself included, ate. When we were finished, the waiters removed our dishes, pausing each time, with a courtesy as grave as before, for Leavis's assent to the removal of his. I had heard that as a result of injuries sustained during the First World War he was confined to a strict diet; hence his abstinence, presumably, to which neither of us referred. The effect of it, however, was to add to the strain I was under. I felt like some kind of gross creature, sitting there stuffing myself with meat and potatoes, instead of merely watching the comestibles come and go, like my host. From time to time I exchanged civilities with the Master, who at least was in the same boat as I was.

So far from Leavis taking advantage of the circumstances in order to conduct a monologue during the meal, as he has been accused by others of doing on other occasions, I have a clear memory of the attentiveness and encouragement of his manner, of the readiness with which he listened to what I said, of the punctiliousness with which he waited whenever it appeared that I was about to speak. Because of my feeding habits, waiting was sometimes necessary. Not surprisingly, I can recall only one topic from that conversation, a topic so predictably "Leavisian" as to now seem almost parodic. We talked about George Eliot and D. H. Lawrence—more specifically, about *Middlemarch* and *Women in Love*. I remember saying that Eliot was more generous to her characters, especially the characters of whom she disapproved, than Lawrence was to his—he exulted over Gerald Crich's downfall, whereas she grieved over Lydgate's. After some consideration of this, Leavis said that he wasn't happy with either of the verbs I had used. He did not suggest others, however.

The meal seemed to go on for a long time. At last the Master rose to his feet, and the rest of us got up and began to file out after him. We had taken only a step or two when Leavis threw his head back, and, with a two-handed, choking gesture, tore his tie away from his neck. The meal had gone on for a long time for him too. He had a horror, I had been told, of anything that constricted his neck; that, too, went back to his experiences in the trenches more than forty years before. Outside the hall I was handed over once again to my undergraduate host. As he left, Leavis told me that he was looking forward to my talk. So was Mrs. Leavis. They would join me later.

When I had received the invitation to give a talk, and had seen that Leavis would be my host at dinner, it had occurred to me as a possiblity, though not as a likely one, that he might choose to come to the meeting. Partly for this reason, and partly because I had had virtually nothing to do with the academic world or with academic occasions of any kind since I had been a student at the university in Johannesburg, I had taken a great deal of trouble over what I was going to say. In fact, I had written out every word of it, as if it were a lecture to be given on some formal occasion, not a talk to an undergraduate society. Now, as I made conversation with some of the students who were gathering to hear me, and with a tall, melancholy, prematurely bald young man, in a gray overcoat, who was evidently Leavis's assistant in the teaching of English within the college, I congratulated myself on my forethought. Everything I had to say was there, waiting for me, in the breast pocket of my jacket.

I congratulated myself doubly when the meeting began, with Dr. and Mrs. Leavis sitting side by side directly in front of me, dominating an audience that consisted of fewer than a dozen other people. Because of my anxieties, the piece I had written was solemnly academic in manner and gloomy in content. Whatever its faults, it was all there, anyway, and I proceeded to read it. Page 1 was negotiated without mishap; page 2, likewise; 3, 4, 5, ditto. With the confidence of habit I turned to page 6, only to find myself staring at page 7. Page 6 wasn't there. I had left it at home. The shock was all the greater because I had been depending wholly on the typescript throughout: I felt exactly (the inevitable analogy) like a man at the foot of a staircase who takes a step that isn't there. For a long time, or what seemed a long time, I was silent; then, hobbling a bit, groping a bit, stammering a bit, staring quite a lot at the modest molding where the ceiling met the far wall of the room, I finally made it to page 7. From then on all I had to do was to slog through to the end. Which I did.

Only to discover that it wasn't the end. Question time had begun. Mrs. Leavis wasted

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

no time. In the course of my talk I had tried to present an anatomy of the "colonial" literary situation: inevitably, the way it had come out was as a catalogue of lacks and deficiencies. The sum of her questioning amounted to her asking me what I proposed doing about those lacks and deficiencies. There was no point in my coming to Cambridge to talk to *them* on the subject. Why didn't I go back to South Africa and talk about it there, or emigrate to New Zealand and talk to the New Zealanders about it? Or was I merely pretending to be concerned about the problem? Wearing a black cardigan of almost institutional severity, she kept her circular face and circular glasses trained firmly on me. This ad hominem grilling went on for some time. It went on, in fact, until Leavis roused himself to say, in a whisper that he did not try to render inaudible, "You can't ask a man those sorts of questions!" So, as things had turned out, he was the one protecting me. He did it pretty effectively too. Mrs. Leavis fell silent. Some of the students present, one of them also from South Africa, joined in the discussion, which went on in a desultory fashion for a few minutes. I was thanked by the chairman for my talk, and a polite round of applause followed.

We went to another room for coffee. Now that the public part of the proceedings was over, Mrs. Leavis relented, and came over and conversed quite amiably with me. Evidently she did not bear me a grudge either for the punishment she had inflicted or for the rebuke her husband had administered. When the Leavises got up to go, I said good-bye to them and thanked him for taking me to the dinner. Everyone relaxed after they had gone, even the tutor. He and I talked about common acquaintances: a conversation I cannot now recall without recalling also that more than two decades later I was to read in a newspaper that this uneasy, faintly smiling, shiny-headed man, whom I was never to see again, had been battered to death by an unknown assailant.

Then the evening was over, really over, at last. I retired to the guest bedroom provided for me. Getting into bed I nearly broke my toe on a completely cold hot-water bottle, made of glazed stoneware. It was an item of a kind I had seen previously only in the windows of junk shops.

Next morning a steward showed me into the combination room for breakfast. It was a large room, of which I remember little but various shades and planes of highly polished, dark wood. And chairs. On one of those planes of wood a single place had been laid for breakfast. In solitude and silence I began to eat my cornflakes. To one side of the room were glass doors looking out on a quiet garden. I seem to remember, perhaps erroneously, that it was through those doors, and not through the door I had used, that Leavis came in. He had obviously wanted to see me again; indeed he said so. He had come to the college because he had a letter to write and wanted to compose it in peace; but he had hoped that he might still find me there. I was touched, surprised, and flattered by this attention. My only regret was that once again I had been caught with my mouth full.

His manner, as he sat down across the table from me, was relaxed, compared at least with how I had found it the previous evening. Yet I had the impression once again of instantly finding myself in the vicinity of a ceaseless, relentless mental and emotional activity, sustained wholly from within, that manifested itself as much in the posture of his body as in the cadences of his voice, as much in the choice of subjects to talk about as in some of the motives and states of mind his language made transparent. The letter he had come to write, he told me, was a delicate one. He was on the point of retiring. To mark the occasion, the college had commissioned a portrait to be hung in the hall, or elsewhere. However, a problem had arisen. He and his wife had seen some of the work of the man who had been approached to do the job, and had not cared for it. "He's a man who goes around the country painting portraits of distinguished people—without any distinction at all." But how to indicate that he, the subject, the sitter, the recipient of the honor, was not happy with the choice made by the college and wanted another man to carry out the task? His wife could not see that there was any difficulty. According to her, all he had to do was to tell them that he wouldn't have their man. She didn't understand, he said, that in dealing with such a topic there came a time when one couldn't accept anyone else's suggestions—"no matter *who* they come from or *how* forcefully they are put."

Later he told me that as a young man he had been urged to take the newly established

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

chair of English at the university I had attended in Johannesburg. "They" had told him it would be a wonderful opportunity for him—a new chair, a new university, a new country. "They wanted to get rid of me," he said, as if it were the most obvious remark in the world for him to have made at that juncture; one so obvious as to need neither any special emphasis nor anything further by way of explanation. Yet in his voice, for all the offhandedness with which he had just spoken, there was something of the child's guile and triumph in outwitting the adults' stupid schemings; and, as well, the closely hugged desolation of a lifetime's anger and misery.

It would be wrong, though, for me to give the impression that he was the only one who talked over that breakfast table. The conversation rambled, rather, from "those subaltern books," as he called them, about the First World War (Graves, Sassoon, Blunden, etc.) to the drinking habits of a well-known reviewer of the day, since deceased. Throughout, he was as courteous and considerate toward me as he could possibly have been. He insisted on walking across the college court with me, to see me back to the room where I had left my overnight bag. As we made our way across the quadrangle, now gleaming mildly in the morning sunlight, he pointed out a space to one side where they were building, or had recently built, what he described with a sudden access of venom as "*dentists*' houses." We shook hands, and he turned smartly and went back the way he had come, walking even more rapidly, now that he was on his own, than before. In the years that followed, I dreamed about him, improbably and affectionately, several times. And I kept up, though with an ever-increasing sense of distance and skepticism, with the essays he went on publishing almost to the very end.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dreiser and Mencken

In the Literary Trenches

THOMAS P. RIGGIO

On a hot August day in 1918, the as yet unpublished F. Scott Fitzgerald stood on Capitol Hill in Washington, trying to impress two young women from Montgomery, Alabama, with his promise as a writer. To that end, he told them that he was about to send a story to *Smart Set* and that "Mencken and Dreiser were the greatest living writers in America." The girls (one of whom, Sara Haardt, would marry Mencken twelve years later) were more startled by the romantic gesture in the infantry lieutenant's boots and spurs than by his literary savvy. What he had to say was hardly news in 1918. By then Mencken, along with George Jean Nathan, had made *Smart Set* a goal for aspiring writers. In its pages, for nearly a decade, Mencken had labored to establish Dreiser as the norm against which fiction in America was to be judged. One function of literary criticism is to create cultural fable, and Dreiser, who had a gift for self-dramatization, proved a good match for his friend's mythmaking. When Sherwood Anderson spoke of "the wilderness of Puritan denial" as "the road that Dreiser faced alone," he spoke, like many of his contemporaries, in the vivid hyperbole that Mencken had invented.

Like Fitzgerald, the younger writers tended to canonize their mentors, though after 1925 their remarks increasingly betrayed an uneasy sense of the two men as forces in their youth rather than as active influences. When, in 1926, Walter Lippmann called Mencken "the most powerful personal influence on this whole generation of educated people," he was referring to the generation that came of age just before the World War. Most of the writers starting out during the war years could agree with Waldo Frank, who wrote, also in 1926, that "in the good old days before the war, Dreiser was the one American novelist whom a self-respecting radical could take time to read." The Great War was, in fact, the dividing line in this generation's view of the two men. After 1919, the avant-garde found a new metaphor for reality in the war, a spiritual home in Europe, and an aesthetic that took for granted the old battles fought in the name of realism. So while individual careers flourished—the twenties saw Dreiser's big novel, *An American Tragedy*, and much of Mencken's best work, as well as his influential editorship of the *American Mercury*—the causes they shared in the past were beginning to seem like ancient history.

It was history, nonetheless, recalled as heroic and usable. By 1926 the good old days before the war had achieved the status of a cultural drama in which Dreiser and Mencken's friendship—it was more accurately perceived as a literary alliance—held center stage. The story is by now familiar. It boasted a cast of villains, enemies of art and intellect, whose names remained catchwords throughout the twenties: "puritans," politicians, the "booboisie," "religionists," the professors, the "Anglo-Saxons." With Dreiser as his model, Mencken successfully domesticated a European ideal of the writer as social pariah. The key scenes, as Mencken orchestrated them, ranged from the melodramatic "suppression" of *Sister Carrie* by the Doubledays and other arbiters of native taste to attempts by the heirs of Anthony Comstock to censor Dreiser's autobiographical novel *The "Ge-*

THOMAS P. RIGGIO, associate professor of English at the University of Connecticut, is editing the Dreiser-Mencken letters.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nius." From this mixture of fact and artifice, the critic and the novelist created a cultural myth, larger than experience, that served as a model of artistic integrity.

The legendary cast they gave their early enterprises obscured a good deal of what went on behind the scenes. Legends, we know, have a way of blurring the details of personal experience, even as they put in focus the intangible core of historical event. The letters the two men exchanged for nearly forty years are reminders of how social issues may affect private relations as well as public postures. Though they differed greatly in temperament and style, they also shared much, particularly a joy in the adversary roles they cultivated as national rebels. They defined themselves aggressively against the American grain and made a name together as intellectual bad boys, ready always to take on the prevailing literary, moral, or political gospel of the day. Though we don't think of them as writers marked by the World War, they were touched by the conflict, perhaps in more enduring ways than Hemingway or E. E. Cummings or Dos Passos. As German-Americans, their experience of the war reinforced their sense of themselves as outsiders fiercely at odds with the pieties of most Americans. The language of the battlefield, moreover, provided them with the terms to define their relation to American life, as well as a way of describing the rocky course of their friendship. They left a legacy as battlers in causes that now seem remote, but in the process they significantly altered the substance and tone of cultural discourse.

I

In the spring of 1908, the two men met for the first time in Dreiser's *Delineator* office on Spring and McDougal streets in Manhattan. Dreiser was thirty-seven and Mencken ten years his junior. Already considered something of a prodigy in newspaper circles, Mencken had come to the attention of Dreiser who, as managing editor of Butterick Publications, was trying to enlist new writing talent for the three magazines under his control. Though on the payroll of the Baltimore *Sun*, Mencken began free-lancing for Dreiser as early as August 1907. Dreiser had been pleased with the younger man's contributions, which, he later recalled, "bristled with gay phraseology and a largely suppressed though still peeping mirth." Sporting yellow shoes and a gaudy tie, Mencken marched into the editor's office to discuss a series of articles on infant care that he had agreed to ghostwrite for a prominent Baltimore physician. In 1925, when Dreiser wrote of this encounter, he rendered it as a rare case of "instantaneous friendship," stimulated by a comic shock of recognition.

> More than anything else he reminded me of a spoiled and petted and possibly over-financed brewer's or wholesale grocer's son who was out for a lark. With the sang-froid of a Caesar or a Napoleon he made himself comfortable in a large and impressive chair which was designed primarily to reduce the over-confidence of the average beginner. And from that particular and unintended vantage point he beamed on me with the confidence of a smirking fox about to devour a chicken. So I was the editor of the Butterick Publications. He had been told about me. However, in spite of Sister Carrie, I doubt if he had ever heard of me before this. After studying him in this almost arch-episcopal setting which the chair provided, I began to laugh. "Well, well," I said, "if it isn't Annheuser's own brightest boy out to see the town."

The "brewer's son" knew more than he let on. He knew that the senior editor in New York could provide a larger audience for his writing than he had in Baltimore. He knew that Dreiser, an officer in the publishing company of B. W. Dodge, could help him place the more serious work he was planning, books on German philosophy and European drama. He also knew that a certain amount of deference was due the author of *Sister Carrie*, a novel he in fact had read in 1900 and one, he felt, that showed genius.

That early spring meeting came at crucial points in their careers. While they worked Grub Street successfully, editing and writing articles on subjects from pediatrics and women's suffrage to humorous pieces for the *Delineator*'s "Man's Page," in private they felt the need for more substantial work. In each other they soon found ready sounding boards for something more than the usual banter and shoptalk of the marketplace. They quickly began what came natural to them: the endless debates over social and philosophical matters, conducted in the heady, earnest manner of bright autodidacts.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Early on, they encountered differences that would strain their relations over the years. Typical is Dreiser's response to an editorial Mencken sent him in 1909 entitled "The Decay of the Churches": "And isn't seeking knowledge (scientific) a form of prayer. Aren't scientists and philosophers at bottom truly reverential and don't they wish (pray) ardently for more knowledge . . . the truth is men are not less religious—they are religious in a different way—and that's a fact." Mencken's reply set the tone for future debates: "In all honesty, I can't follow you. The scientific impulse seems to me to be the very opposite of the religious impulse. When a man seeks knowledge he is trying to gain a means of fighting his own way in the world, but when he prays he confesses that he is unable to do so. The essential thing about prayer is that it assumes that the moods of the gods are *not* fixed and invariable. If they were, it would be silly to ask the gods to change them. This idea, I think, explains the decay of religion." Dreiser's pluralism was later deeply to offend Mencken, who could never understand the novelist's tolerance for visionaries, mystics, and metaphysics; and Mencken's rationalism puzzled Dreiser to the end. At this point, however, they welcomed the intellectual sparring and allowed philosophy to take a back seat to the practical business of making names for each other.

Dreiser used his influence to find his young protégé a market for his wares, and when he started, sub rosa, a magazine called *The Bohemian*, he gave Mencken a free hand in return for quick copy. When he heard that *Smart Set* needed a book reviewer, he recommended his friend, and as Mencken later quipped, "Dreiser got me my job . . . and so made a literary critic of me." In his first full-time post as a critic, the magazine's new man began boosting the one-book novelist who, with the exception of a few devotees, was unknown to the reading public. Years later, in a letter to Burton Rascoe, Mencken acknowledged how much his critical practice had been honed on the fiction of the somber realist: "Next to [Robert I.] Carter, I learned most from Percival Pollard—particularly the value, to a critic, of concentrating on a few men. Pollard used Ambrose Bierce; I used Dreiser." On his part, Dreiser would never forget that, as he wrote in 1920, "except for your valiant and unwearied and even murderous assaults and onslaughts in my behalf I should be little farther than in 1910."

The year 1910 was a turning point. Ten years after completing his first novel, Dreiser's platonic infatuation with Thelma Cudlipp, the eighteen-year-old daughter of a woman close to his boss, cost him his job at Butterick. To Mencken the former editor in chief confided his sorrows, like a middle-aged Werther, in one-line jottings on office memo sheets: "I have discovered that this is a very sad world"; "I am very lonely. Is there no hope." Mencken advised him to write another novel. The affair did, in fact, send Dreiser back to the writer's desk, never again to earn his living from any other source. The next five years saw a phenomenal burst of creative energy that included the completion of four large novels, an autobiography, travel books, plays, and poetry.

More than friendship accounts for Mencken's response to this body of writing. As the *Smart Set*'s critic in residence, he had been lamenting the sad state of contemporary American fiction. Before he read the manuscript of Dreiser's second novel, *Jennie Gerhardt* (the story of a "fallen" German-American girl who, by the way, had the same last name as the second wife of the critic's grandfather), he could hold out only David Graham Phillips as worthy of serious notice. With Dreiser's work he was able, for the first time, to elaborate an argument for a native writer around the principles he had absorbed from his study of the European realists. As younger men, he and Dreiser had been drawn to the same intellectual masters, particularly Thomas Huxley, Herbert Spencer, and the biological naturalists. Though they had read these writers differently, they shared a view of life conditioned by late nineteenth-century determinism. *Jennie Gerhardt* offered both men a second surprise of recognition, but this time Mencken dropped the comic mask. Rarely does one find, in the standard accounts of a perennially amused Mencken, the figure who wrote Dreiser that the book "comes upon me with great force. It touches my own experience of life in a hundred places; it preaches (or perhaps I had better say exhibits) a philosophy of life that seems to be sound; altogether I get a powerful effect of reality, stark and unashamed. It is drab and gloomy, but so is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the struggle for existence. It is without humor, but so are the jests of the great comedian who shoots at our heels and makes us do our grotesque dancing." As long as Dreiser did not not stray beyond this philosophically, Mencken would remain a disciple.

Dreiser found in Mencken an enthusiastic supporter of his brand of realism, a friend who believed in his star and who was willing to champion him in respectable literary circles. In effect, the decade of the teens saw Mencken guiding Dreiser's career in much the same spirit that the novelist had earlier advanced his. Always insecure about his talents, Dreiser needed not only promotion but sympathetic understanding—and, most of all, a good editor. Mencken met these needs tirelessly. In reviews, he praised the novelist as America's only great modernist, the peer of Conrad and the major Russians. In America, Dreiser alone used the novel form the way Mencken supposed it should be used; his fiction pictured a harsh world in which people were moved like pieces on a chess board. Of *Jennie Gerhardt* he wrote, "It has no more moral than a string quartet or the first book of Euclid," and he exulted in "the profound unmorality" of *The Titan,* which he read as "a great Nietzschean document." Mencken advertised Dreiser—and, of course, himself—as a homegrown *immoraliste* at a time when his readers were learning about such things in new editions of Nietzsche, Ibsen, Shaw, and Gide.

As Mencken's comments suggest, he early on cast Dreiser in his own image. Even before the outbreak of the war in Europe, the friendship was cemented by a shared sense of social identity. Conservative critics quickly—and correctly—branded them as part of the newer forces breaking with the dominant Anglo-American tradition. Their letters took on the air of strategy papers that aimed at winning over a hostile publishing establishment and marshaling an offensive against what both referred to as American puritanism. By 1914, they had developed a sense of common cause that often overflowed into the charged rhetoric of their personal exchange. "The philistines," Dreiser wrote in that year, "will never run us out as long as life do last. Given health and strength we can shake the American Jericho to its fourth substory." In effect, their private dialogue became the mine out of which they began forging a public image of themselves as blood brothers in the fight for literary freedom. Dreiser supplied the text—the "suppression" of *Sister Carrie,* the subsequent nervous breakdown, the decade of silence imposed upon him by agents of repression, the manuscripts bowdlerized by puritanical publishers, the hackwork necessary to survive as a writer—and Mencken supplied the theory of a culture bent on destroying its true artists.

Much of this was less radical than it appears in hindsight. By the mid-teens, attacks against cultural orthodoxy had won over a large enough audience to pay its own way, whether in the national journals or the proliferating little magazines and theaters or the groups beginning to think Greenwich Village a nice place to visit. Mencken alienated many but he amused more, and the whole enterprise was carried on in great high spirits. He crusaded cheerfully for his friend, edited his prose, saw him through regular bouts of self-doubt, and muted his reservations about the writer who, he recalled after Dreiser's death, "came into the world with an incurable antipathy to the *mot juste*" and "an insatiable appetite for the obviously not true." They traded reviews, consulted the Ouija board for tips on how to confound the censors, and worked out schemes to manage Dreiser into the Nobel Prize—and split the money. In their correspondence, Mencken's comic routines moved Dreiser to humor of his own, a bit heavier-handed but humor nonetheless. The two became familiar figures on the town, hunting up beer gardens, consuming sizable portions of bratwurst and sauerbraten—and, at one point, they had mistresses who were sisters. Above all, they relished the battle of books. They enjoyed a shared sense of purpose that few writers knew—the more staid Howells-Twain friendship and the high-minded Hawthorne-Melville exchange are notable exceptions—in a literary landscape that discouraged such bonds.

The revolt against native pieties included a telling paradox: the greatest living American novelist, Mencken argued, was so by virtue of his break with an impoverished native tradition. His fiction was "so European in its method, its point of view, its almost reverential seriousness, that one can scarcely imagine an American writing it." This was the basis of his case for the novelist, and it helps explain a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

good deal of the intensity behind their response to each other. For in initiating the critical cliché of Dreiser as a presence with no cultural roots in America, Mencken linked his friend's achievement to what he sensed were the wellsprings of his own creative energy. The critic and the novelist shared, above all, a pervasive ambivalence about their public roles, an intense conflict between their large professional ambitions and their postures as gadflies to a society from whose native traditions they seemed, by birth and temperament, to be alienated. This identification stimulated a friendship that was as stormy as it was full of sentiment. The storms were predictable. Any deviation from the precepts of their public stance—whether it was Dreiser's wish to accept an award from the stodgy American Academy of Arts and Letters or the compromises Mencken made to public opinion in the editing of *Smart Set*—was taken as a personal betrayal. It was a tension that both men contended with, in complex ways, for nearly four decades. For better and worse, it dominated the friendship and gave it a singular style and tone, a mixture of principled rebellion and rancorous mischief, that became the trademark of their joint endeavors.

II

The war in Europe intensified the relations between the two men. From 1914 to 1919 they faced a challenge from the critical old guard that aligned itself, in those years, with latter-day know-nothings who worked openly and proudly in the name of patriotic nativism and literary censorship. This placed their private lives under considerable strain, and it gave a political dimension to their work. The challenge drew its strength from the intense and widespread anti-Germanism of the period, which saw, among other things, thousands of Germans arrested on presidential warrants and thrown into internment camps, pronouncements to equal Theodore Roosevelt's advice that disloyal Germans be hung or shot, the banning of German language and music, and even mob lynching.

Two years before America's entry into the war, Mencken and Dreiser began comparing notes about the personal toll they, as noncombatants, would pay if the country fought against Germany. "I expect to go to jail with the first batch of Baltimore suspects. Maybe we can contrive to be incarcerated in the same dungeon." The war tensions reinforced the friendship—at a crucial time, since they had already begun the long-term quarrel about Dreiser's experimental fiction and his leftist political friends—and their exchange became a bonding ritual in the face of what they saw as a common enemy. Their jokes reflected the fears they lived with: "I believe that both of us will be killed by patriots within six months," wrote Mencken in 1916, as bravado mixed with wartime hysteria. And he added, "You will be lucky, with your German name, if you are not jailed the day the U.S. enters the war." Dreiser answered in kind and started closing his letters with "Deutschland über alles." When the United States entered the war, Mencken shared with Dreiser his fears of mob violence against his family in Baltimore, and Dreiser escaped stress by retreating to Maryland's farm country, where Mencken would join him to discuss their fates over gin highballs.

They were, the record shows, easy marks for wartime mania. Especially Mencken who, with his attachment to Baltimore and its old-world ethos, had flaunted his taste for German music, food, and beer in his earliest essays, while his books on Nietzsche and the frequent use of the philosopher in reviews earned him the title of the "American Nietzschean." For years he had underscored Dreiser's Teutonic qualities, particularly before 1914 when it was still legitimate to trace the origins of liberty to the dark woods of Germany. Moreover, Dreiser's first readers were sensitive to the ethnic implications of *Jennie Gerhardt* and the Nietzschean chapter titles of *The Titan*. They were aware, if only in a vague way before the war, that Dreiser was, in F. O. Matthiessen's words, "virtually the first major American writer whose family name was not English or Scotch-Irish." Mencken himself often pointed out—by way of explaining how dead his friend's ear was to standard prose rhythms—that he was a novelist who grew up speaking a language other than English.

After 1915 their public profile put them—and other German-American intellectuals like George Sylvester Viereck and Ludwig Lewisohn—on the defensive. Dreiser and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mencken did not suffer the public indignity of, say, Karl Muck who, as conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, needed a police guard to direct concerts, until he was interned in 1918 for the duration of the war. Yet Mencken's refusal to follow the official line lost him his job on the *Sunpapers*. He went over to the New York *Evening Mail* on the condition that he not write about the war, but he was fired in 1918 when the paper's publisher was arrested as a German agent and the new management tried to implicate him. Dreiser too felt the pinch of wartime editorial practice. To this day, long pieces like "American Idealism and German Frightfulness" remain in manuscript. He argued there that the war, conducted by "pro-moralistic Puritans" and Anglophiles, would "force two or three or four or five million American boys to face an almost impregnable autocratic firing line," and that "we are sending them to die in an unjust cause."

By 1917 one did not have to be German to suffer for such views. Randolph Bourne's antiwar articles in *Seven Arts* brought charges of pro-German sympathies and spelled the end of an important journal; *Masses* folded after the trial of its staff, including Max Eastman, Floyd Dell, and Art Young, for violating the Sedition Act of 1917. In this climate, the stigma of his German heritage followed Dreiser into the critical arena, where critics like Paul Elmer More and Stuart Sherman lambasted him for his mixed loyalties. Sherman's famous attack on his "barbaric naturalism" stressed its roots in Dreiser's German-American background, and he held up Dreiser's books as the signal of "a new note in American literature, coming from the 'ethnic' element in our mixed population." Reviewing Mencken's *Book of Prefaces* (1917) in the *Nation*, Sherman took the chance to club Mencken as well: "Mr. Mencken," he wrote with mocking irony, "is not a German. He was born in Baltimore, September 12, 1880. That fact should silence the silly people who have suggested that he and Dreiser are secret agents of the Wilhelmstrasse." As descendants of German immigrants, Dreiser and Mencken in effect shared in the nativist backlash that, before the war, had been reserved for more recent southern and eastern European groups.

Never known for their tolerance, the two men found no reason to practice it then. Mencken sent Dreiser hostile reviews with glosses designed to keep the novelist on edge: "The Atlantic Monthly review [of *The "Genius"*] is typically and beautifully Anglo-Saxon. . . . I notice the accusation of Teutonic deviltry. Ah, the brave loyalists!" Mencken had a point. *The "Genius,"* which was quickly linked to the "Hun Menace," gave both sides the chance to blur the distinctions between literature and social fact. "We hope," one reviewer said in 1915, "that *The 'Genius'* will appear in a German translation. That's how kindly we feel toward the Germans." Dreiser's most unwieldy and sexually explicit novel was, Mencken thought, his worst book; and his *Smart Set* review, "A Literary Behemoth," remains a classic—and comic—analysis of Dreiser at his worst. But when the Western Society for the Prevention of Vice united with John Sumner's New York branch to suppress the novel and everyone ran for cover, including publisher John Lane, Mencken went on the offensive. Mencken realized that the novel "has exactly the right defects to invite such an attack, but none the less the attack itself is dishonest." He solicited the aid of the Authors' League of America, and the case became an international cause célèbre.

The whole affair added a measure to their relationship, as it crystallized their view of themselves as the principals in a major literary revolution. The terms, so heightened, led to a dialogue that reflected the charged nature of their cause. By the summer of 1916, Mencken could write Dreiser, "The thing I am most afraid of, as I wrote you, is the introduction into the case of the German spy fear." To counter this, they gave their activities the trappings of a spy novel, speaking of "smuggling" the plates of *The "Genius"* across state lines, publishing "subversive" articles, and checking mail for signs of official tampering. They exchanged congratulations as German troops drove into France, and, after some of the most tragically bloody battles in military history, they toasted to British military ineptitude.

I suggested earlier that, in this period, the rhetoric of war conditioned the style and tenor of literary debate. Metaphors of the battlefield came easy to them. When Mencken wanted to caution Dreiser against having radicals join

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the "*Genius*" protest, he simply asked, "Why start a fight in the trench while bombardment is going on?" The private exchange, which set the tone for their public posture, illustrates how the conflict encouraged them in what Paul Fussell sees as a major legacy of the Great War: what he calls the habit of "gross dichotomizing," or the tendency to see the other as "enemy" that characterizes political and cultural debate in this century. How such a tendency can turn a relatively harmless bias—before the war they traced the ills of American culture to its imitation of priggish English models—into something else, is seen in a typical postscript to one of Mencken's letters: "The British loss at Neuve Chapelle: 11,850. Gott strafe the dirty lice." Or this from Dreiser: he hoped the country would put aside its infatuation with England, recognize its real enemies, and then "arm, *arm*, *arm*, and when ready, and unfairly treated, strike."

The two men supported each other in a paranoiac style that is perhaps endemic in all wartime societies. Mencken had aired pro-German sentiments in his "Free Lance" column, but after that outlet was blocked, he turned to Dreiser who shared his belief that German-Americans were being forced into "a separateness which, before the war, had never marked them." Their letters became a secret weapon, a form of defense against an escalating sense of social marginality. The old formulas took on new meanings. Before 1914 the familiar straw man, the American as puritan, functioned largely as a rhetorical device; by 1915 Mencken could write Dreiser about "the Puritan mind . . . and its maniacal fear of the German." They met slander with slander, and the old nemesis "puritanism" took on new racial coloration: "The only genuine anti-Puritans to be found in this country are men who are not Anglo-Saxon. Even [Willard Huntington] Wright, who bears an Anglo-Saxon name, is actually Dutch and French in ancestry." Dreiser made a point of signing off letters with "Success to all Hyphenates." And they turned, as comic relief for their tensions, to swapping pro-German oaths in pidgin German and composing German macaronic verse.

Dreiser and Mencken seldom wrote this way to others. There are many reasons for this (some having to do with the mysteries of friendship), but the fact remains that no other American writer—certainly not one of Dreiser's stature—gave Mencken the occasion for a fight that had such personal meaning for him. More than ever before, the two men provided each other with mirror images. The novelist's predicament energized Mencken's strenuous effort to find a critical language that would capture both the temper of his time and his own angst. After the war, Mencken put this another way in one of his best essays, "Footnote on Criticism."

> What, then, was my motive in writing about Mr. Dreiser so copiously? My motive, well known to Mr. Dreiser himself and to everyone who knew me as intimately as he did, was simply and solely to sort out and give coherence to the ideas of Mr. Mencken, and to put them in suave and ingratiating terms, and to discharge them with a flourish, and maybe with a phrase of pretty song, into the dense fog that blanketed the Republic.

Apart from the later need to distance himself from Dreiser, there is a calculated ingenuousness to this, for Mencken knew how few ingratiating terms or phrases of pretty song he had written for Dreiser. He understood, on some very conscious level, that for them the profession of letters had become inseparable from the politics of war. I imagine most readers today are still struck by the force of that combination as it expresses itself in the vivid, martial imagery of Mencken's first full-dress essay on Dreiser in *A Book of Prefaces*. A source of this power lies in the personal alarm he surely felt knowing that, as he says in the essay, "the effort to depict Dreiser as a secret agent of the Wilhelmstrasse, told off to inject subtle doses of *Kultur* into a naive and pious people, has taken on the proportions of an organized movement."

The following passage from the *Prefaces* essay is worth quoting at length, since it shows how Mencken, even at his most critical and satirical, had come to define Dreiser's practice by using metaphors and images drawn from the language of the battlefield.

> He blasts his way through his interminable stories by something not unlike main strength; his writing, one feels, often takes on the character of an actual siege operation, with tunnellings, drum fire, assaults in close order and hand-to-hand fighting. Once, seeking an analogy, I called him the Hindenburg of the novel. If it holds, then "The 'Genius' " is his Poland. The field of action bears the aspect, at

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the end, of a hostile province meticulously brought under the yoke, with every road and lane explored to its beginning, and every crossroads village laboriously taken, inventoried and policed. Here is the very negation of Gallic lightness and intuition, and all other forms of impressionism as well.

There is a shrewd sleight of hand at work here. Even at his crudest, Mencken hints, Dreiser elicts awe; and the passage takes us back to the sweep of the opening paragraph and its sense that "there is something downright heroic in the way the man has held his narrow and perilous ground." Such language, in the context of its time, acts as a mode of cultural aggression. The "negation of Gallic lightness," the notion that there is "perilous ground" outside the European trenches, the fact of heroism in a native Hindenburg—all this would have associations for readers in 1917 that are lost to us now.

Out of such associations, Mencken reinforced and added a new dimension to the image he had earlier created of a primitive, isolated, and beleaguered writer forced to survive on nothing but genius. In his hands, Dreiser became the model of the artist for whom creative expression was inseparable from the politics of cultural confrontation. That image has defied revision, and it has proven as much a handicap to the novelist's harshest critics as to those who find something different in his writing. Dreiser was not an innocent in all this; he understood that Mencken was his best advocate, not his best critic. He sent his letters to Baltimore filled with the stuff of literary fable. And he more than matched Mencken's commitment to revolt against the national order of things as the abiding metaphor of his career.

Such a tack did not put much money in their pockets, but by the end of the war they knew they had won their battles. They were associated in the public mind as closely as Fitzgerald had stated in 1918. Mencken spoke for himself, too, when he addressed Dreiser at the start of the twenties: "At fifty years you are not only permanently secure. You have become a sort of national legend. The younger generation is unanimously on your side." To that generation, the two together offered a dramatic instance of literary practice. They had conducted a frontal assault on the bastions of "puritan" morality and routed the stiff-collars that dominated the marketplace. They helped establish a model for literary discourse, which became more militant and more tied to social realities than any that had preceded them. That discourse served as a legacy for writers in the twenties and made its way into the vocabulary of later and different writers and critics. Its tones can be heard in the note of surprised liberation in Richard Wright, in the charged impieties of Henry Miller, or in the outrageous pronouncements of Norman Mailer. It is, to be sure, a brand of discourse not suited to the judicious transaction of literary affairs. It is discourse, however, that has proven useful in this century.

III

After the war, early in 1920, Mencken wrote Dreiser: "The future of both of us, I think, lies on the other side of the water. Next year I hope to do a book for publication in German only—on American literature and civilization." He encouraged Dreiser to "get away from visible America. My own scheme is to move to Munich as soon as I can shake off my obligations. I have five or six books to write, wholly unlike anything I have yet done. Trying to write them while in active contact with American life would be like trying to read in a nail factory." The history of Mencken's impulse to expatriate—from the war years to the late sorry entries of his still unpublished diary—is the subject of another essay. Clearly, however, such remarks to Dreiser suggest a source of Mencken's ability to speak to a postwar generation that found other reasons for flight. The impuse, in his case, ran so deep that a few years in Paris—or, for him, Munich—could not heal the emotional wounds. Mencken, of course, stayed home, announced that the show was funnier in America, and wrote essays that debunked that impulse and often dazzlingly transformed it into the barbed criticism that fitted the mood of the time. In all this, the example of Dreiser and the themes of the war years remained close to his growing repertoire of prejudices.

While Dreiser remained a fixed point in Mencken's essays of the twenties, the conflicts they had put aside during the war years began to tell on the friendship. They disagreed about, among other things, the value of Dreiser's work after *The "Genius."* Mencken had made famous the novelist's so-called de-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cade of silence after *Sister Carrie*, but he could not understand the even longer hiatus between *The "Genius"* and *An American Tragedy*. When Mencken chastised him for not completing the novel he had promised in 1915, Dreiser gave him a quick history lesson: "If I had counted on my novels during this time I would have starved. Imagine *The Bulwark* put out in war times! God Almighty!"

The war and the related trials over *The "Genius"* had, in fact, turned Dreiser in on himself as a writer. Between 1914 and his decision in 1924 to devote himself to *An American Tragedy*, his energy went into large memoirs and into genres that are not major forms for him: plays like *The Hand of the Potter* and philosophical essays—for which Mencken expressed his distaste privately and in print. Dreiser began slowly to reverse the habit of a decade, asking the critic to hold back his reviews, or at least "say what you please *along* with the others (or nothing) . . . but don't lead the procession." Despite ritual gatherings at Luchow's, the spirit of the old beer hall camaraderie began to fade. As Mencken wrote Ernest Boyd: "Dreiser, it appears, is subtly outraged by certain passages in my prefaces. . . . I suddenly find myself very lonely in New York."

The loneliness was compounded by the physical distance Dreiser put between them. By early 1920 he had settled in Los Angeles with Helen Richardson, an actress and distant cousin who would eventually become his second wife. Mencken was startled to learn that he had slipped quietly out of New York, and for the next few years he remained puzzled by the resettlement, since Dreiser kept the affair with Helen hidden from him. Because they didn't meet again until 1923, they maintained the friendship through correspondence, and so it became less immediate and more ritualized.

The changes are striking. First of all, the usual preoccupation with books in progress gave way to the need to reassess their relationship. The letters in these years strike a note of culmination, and even nostalgia. The old critical exchanges are still there, but more energy is spent on recapitulating the past. They began, noticeably, to reflect on the passage of time. Looking back on Mencken's long campaign in his behalf, Dreiser quoted Samuel Johnson on the author of merit who, without a sympathetic critic, "may pass without notice, huddled in the variety of things and thrown into the general miscellany of life." And he added, calling upon familiar metaphors, "You opened with big guns & little & kept them going. The fact that a few white flags begin to appear is due to you and you alone. And now I sometimes wonder what more. The fireside & a limping old age. Hell."

As their past triumphs began to fade, Mencken in particular found it difficult to adjust to the new order of things. He felt abandoned, he told Dreiser, by the old warriors who fought against puritanism and nativist politics. "Huneker's autobiography [*Steeplejack*], by the way, is crap. The old boy tries his damndest to appear respectable, and even assures everybody that he is 100% American. The book leaves me very depressed. One by one, they drop from the tree." Dreiser's defection—to the "radicals," to Hollywood, away from old-fashioned realism—was the hardest to take. Mencken's moods of depression came more frequently now. He complained often to Dreiser of being in a "bad state mentally. I begin to believe that I'll never do the books I want to do"—to which Dreiser sent assurance that he had "20 more brisk years yet & your influence will grow faster each year." Years later, Mencken confided that "since the age of forty I have been full of a sense of human sorrow." Now in his early forties, he began to show signs of hypochondria, and he would joke frequently about symptoms of "menopause": "These troubles [hay fever] I ascribe to the menopause. I was 44 on Friday and already have the classical symptoms: hot flushes, delusions, etc. One of them is a terrific thirst for beer." At times, the line between real feelings and the comic set piece is hard to find: "I am suffering from the phenomena of the menopause, including melancholia. I have aged 40 years in 10 days."

Rarely, however, did the retrospection of this period turn maudlin. More often, they found ways of converting personal stress into hearty humor. When Dreiser discussed writing the memoirs of his literary experiences, he told Mencken, "You will find another angle of yourself suggested—no more—because I have never known you really." Mencken responded in character: "You say you have never known me really. No doubt you recall the story of the Irishman who dropped his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sandwich in the gutter. 'Mike,' he said to his friend, 'have you ever tasted horse-piss.' 'No,' said the friend. 'Well,' said the sandwich dropper, 'you ain't missed much.' "

Humor, we assume, tells us something about our more serious concerns. The numerous jokes (often of the locker-room variety) about sexual prowess, impotence, unmanageable hangovers, and death were a new feature of their correspondence. They began, for instance, to exchange "famous last words," Dreiser suggesting "Shakespeare, I come" for himself and Mencken instructing Dreiser—"At the moment of my decease, even before you glue my eyes shut"—to inform the waiting crowd that "His last words were: 'My only regret is that I have but one Arschloch to leave to my country.' "

Much of this was, of course, premature and reflected mid-life jitters rather than a diminution of real powers. The twenties proved to be a splendid decade for both men. Their careers flourished. Dreiser made his last and greatest breakthrough as a novelist and for the first time turned a nice profit from his fiction. In 1924 Mencken co-founded one of the landmarks of modern popular journalism, and his influence, as editor of the *American Mercury*, was greater than ever. Starting with the opening number, he published Dreiser regularly. Mencken helped edit Dreiser's memoirs, and they negotiated for translations of their work into German. They played together too. After Dreiser returned to New York in 1923, he and Mencken roared in proverbial twenties fashion, though after a few late-night sprees in mixed company, they concluded that "sex and beerparties do not agree," and abandoned the speakeasies for more discreet gatherings at Dreiser's place. Once again they displayed mischievous high spirits in public, as when they exchanged inscriptions on a costly antique Bible on show at the Gotham Book Mart, and, to the dismay of the shop clerks, Mencken wrote, "If it wasn't for me, Dreiser would be raising chickens in Kansas."

Yet an edge of defensiveness and caution was seldom missing. There was nothing new in this. But now that they were famous and the old survival tactics were no longer needed, merely personal differences were exaggerated. Mencken grew more and more intolerant of Dreiser's Greenwich Village friends, his gaucheries, and his uneven prose. Moreover, the evidence suggests that Dreiser, with his large sexual appetites and reputation to match, posed a threat to Mencken who, with all his muscular bluster, was more inhibited in this regard. Increasingly, Mencken focused on Dreiser's sexual behavior and became strident in his denunciations. To friends he made constant reference to Dreiser's "playing the stud"; and in the *American Mercury*, invective began to replace reasonable criticism. "Dreiser's heroes imitate the colossal adulteries of a guinea pig," he wrote there in 1924, sounding very much like the puritans he once berated. In response, Dreiser needled him about becoming a moralist, opened letters to him with "Dear John Wesley," and asked about the state of his "Methodist soul."

It was difficult for either man to articulate the deeper causes of discontent. As a result, by early 1926 they were smarting over imagined wounds. There was a misunderstanding over Dreiser's alleged negligence during the final illness of Mencken's mother; and another misunderstanding over a visit to Sing Sing arranged by Mencken to allow Dreiser to gather material for the prison scenes in *An American Tragedy*. Mencken's lukewarm review of the new novel badly hurt Dreiser, who tried unsuccessfully to dismiss it without rancor: "As for your critical predilections, animosities, inhibitions, etc. Tush. Who reads you? Bums and loafers. No goods. We were friends before ever you were a critic of mine, if I recall. And,—if an humble leman may speak up—may remain so—despite various—well—choose your insults." When the break came, the two men intuitively understood the extent of their alienation, and there was guarded silence on both sides.

IV

The silence was broken eight years later, on November 20, 1934, when Dreiser wrote Mencken a letter defending himself against Burton Rascoe's remarks in *The Smart Set Anthology*. Rascoe had written in his introduction that "Mencken broke with Dreiser, because Dreiser would not contribute to a fund to defend *The American Mercury*." Both men agreed that this was blatantly untrue, but declined to analyze the source of past injuries. The years had made a difference. Mencken had settled late, at age fifty, into married life,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and his interest had shifted from criticism to social and political commentary. On his part, Dreiser had gotten used to fighting his literary battles—he had gone to court to defend *An American Tragedy* against the censors—without Mencken. He could not, however, forget how much his present status owed to Mencken's past crusades. (Despite Mencken's disclaimers, Dreiser did not exaggerate the critic's power. The strength of the feeling of debt that Mencken helped to instill in American writers can be gauged by the Nobel Prize winners, from Sinclair Lewis (1930) to Saul Bellow (1976), who felt the need to acknowledge Dreiser publicly. After winning the award in 1936, Eugene O'Neill wrote Dreiser, "I have a sneaking feeling of guilt—as if I had pinched something which I know damned well should, in justice, be yours.")

Past service, however, could carry them only so far. If earlier they mirrored each other's interests and needs, now they were left mainly with inverse images. Intellectually and emotionally, they had grown apart in old age. Dreiser's social activism, his romance with the Left in the thirties, and his scientific and quasi-religious research were far from Mencken's late beliefs. The problem was exacerbated by the different receptions the two men received during the Depression. Mencken appeared reactionary to most intellectuals, while Dreiser, though he wrote little fiction, was well known for his progressive politics. Mencken's *American Mercury* did not survive the decade, partly because of his politics. In the early thirties, his following dropped to a small band of Tories, while the Marxist press attacked him and liberal critics nervously ignored him.

Dreiser tried not to let politics stand in the way of their friendship. Privately, he defended Mencken: "I see they've buried you again in the *New Republic* . . . on the ground that you're not a joiner or special pleader. You should be a revolutionary, an advocate of social justice, an ironer-out of social inequities, like myself and some others. But alas you are not,—just a realist contemplating things realistically. Hence the ceremonies—Ist doch Komish." Mencken was more contentious. He felt that Dreiser "wastes time clowning" rather than attending to his real business—the writing of novels. Dreiser had become a world-saver in Mencken's eyes, and they disagreed about the social and political future of the country. Moreover, Mencken found it hard to absorb Dreiser's philosophical interests, which had become increasingly more mystical in nature. In this respect, Dreiser felt that Mencken had narrowed intellectually; and he wondered that his friend had not outgrown his youthful materialism. Yet, with the exception of the issue of Dreiser's infatuation with Russia, they managed to avoid open conflict. In fact, given their views, both men succeeded admirably at maintaining a surface calm.

Even the prospect of war with Germany, once the spur to a united front, left them simply with sympathetic points of view. The anti-English bias remained, and they both favored American neutrality. Because of their loyalties to Germany, they shared the same ambivalent reactions to the Nazis. (Mencken called them a "gang of lunatics"; Dreiser, whose books the Nazis banned in 1935 as "subversive to the idea of social progress," turned against them after Germany invaded Russia; yet both men viewed Hitler as, at worst, a kind of German New Dealer—"a crook and a high finance stool pigeon," said Dreiser—and they failed to see clearly the plight of the Jews in Europe.) As late as March 1943, Mencken could ask, "What, precisely, are your ideas about the current crusade to save humanity? . . . Are you supporting the war, and if so, to what extent? I recall that during the last great struggle for democracy our ideas were virtually identical, but I somehow gather the impression that you have changed your mind this time." Time had indeed changed Dreiser. His response took away, for Mencken, the need for any further comment. "You ask: 'What, precisely, are your ideas about the current crusade to save humanity.' Personally, I do not know what can save humanity unless it is the amazing Creative force which has brought 'humanity,' along with its entire environment, into being."

Dreiser's energy continued to the end. Despite recurrent illnesses, he managed to complete two novels in the forties and to continue his bouts with publishers and politicians. His last joint effort with Mencken was the disposition of their papers, including the decision to make copies of their letters and divide them between the New York Public Library and the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

University of Pennsylvania. Mencken had the manuscript of *Sister Carrie*, a gift from Dreiser years before, treated for preservation and handsomely bound. In the end, they could agree only on one thing: the importance of their work for posterity. Even in that, they were not given to solemn prophecies: "Some of these days," Mencken wrote after reviewing a batch of manuscripts, "a couple of young Ph.D's will tackle the Dreiser papers at the University of Pennsylvania and the result will be a series of studies so profound that no one on earth will ever be able to read them."

These years Dreiser spent putting his house in order, and that included coming to terms with Mencken. From his home in California, where he had moved in 1938, he sent emotionally charged letters to Baltimore: "For all the bull-headed faults and ironic conclusions of said Heinrich Mencken—I love and always will love him—be the final estimate of said Dreiser or said Mencken what it may." And, "I will love you until the hour of my death." Such appeals gained no response in kind from Mencken. There is pathos in the final letters, as Mencken appears only more perplexed by the road Dreiser has taken, particularly his late membership in the Communist party. Dreiser probably approached the truth when he concluded that their social conflicts were rooted in the ideas they had brought with them from childhood: "Unlike yourself, I am biased. I was born poor." In any case, the tone became increasingly that of two survivors grown old, tired even of personal battles.

When Dreiser died, on December 28, 1945, Helen Dreiser immediately telegraphed Mencken, adding "He loved you" to the announcement. In his diary Mencken noted, almost as if it surprised him, that the news was causing him to feel depressed. He wrote a eulogy, which was not read at the final service, probably because of the references to Dreiser's intellectual credulity and his lifelong disregard of the "*mot juste*." On the positive side, he stuck by the argument he had been making for thirty-five years: despite Dreiser's flaws, "the fact remains that he was a great artist, and that no other American of his generation left so wide and handsome a mark upon the national letters. American writing, before and after his time, differed almost as much as biology before and after Darwin. He was a man of large originality, of profound feeling, and of unshakeable courage. All of us who write are better off because he lived, worked and hoped."

As was his habit, he kept from the public eye any hint of his personal relations with the novelist. Which makes all the more surprising a series of letters to Helen Dreiser, written in early 1946, in which he reflects on the friendship. In these letters he allows himself a freedom of expression that he held in check while Dreiser lived.

> Theodore's death leaves me feeling as if my whole world had blown up. We had met only too seldom in late years, but there was a time when he was my captain in a war that will never end, and we had a swell time together. No other man had a greater influence upon my youth.

He remembers Dreiser "at his best, and his best was incomparable." He also recalls old resentments: "I could never, of course, follow him into his enthusiasms for such things as spiritualism, Communism, and the balderdash of Charles Fort, but they never made any difference between us, for some of my ideas were just as obnoxious to him." On a more personal note: "I resented likewise his aloof indifference to my mother's illness. It was a long time afterward before I ever felt close to him again. But I should have known him better. There was a curiously inarticulate side to him, and it often showed up when he was most moved. If I had another life to live I think I'd attempt a long study of him, trying to account for him. But now it is too late."

And so it was.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

TEACHING

Reuben A. Brower

WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD

On a May morning in 1953, the senior class at Amherst College, of which I was a member, gathered for Senior Chapel, an annual occurrence at which prizes and fellowships were handed out, and the graduating class was addressed by a member of the faculty chosen by the class. That year the one chosen—who had been actively lobbied for by the more "literary" element in the class (or so we thought of ourselves)—was Reuben Brower, Class of 1880 Professor of Greek and English, himself about to depart Amherst, after fourteen years of teaching there, for Harvard University. So when he began his talk, "An Earthly Paradise," with the opening words from Dante's *Inferno* (which we had all read as freshmen) there could be detected a hint of his own mixed feelings about leaving Amherst: "We stand together in our local wood, not quite lost and yet not quite sure where we are going." In fact a large number of my classmates were going to business school, and on from there to make a lot of money; but they doubtless tried to respond to Brower's claim that "we have been in an Earthly Paradise all along" and his suggestion that "before we leave it, we had best give it a thoughtful look." This Brower proceeded to do, and what I remember most from the rest of the talk, aside from the easy grace and mellow playfulness of its tone, appropriate to the slightly self-important occasion, were two sentences he quoted from Jane Austen. They would, he hoped, help us strike a balance between sentimentality and cynicism: "Think only of the past as its remembrance gives you pleasure," was the first; "One does not love a place the less for having suffered in it," was the second. I never encounter these sentences from *Pride and Prejudice* and *Persuasion* without hearing a special ring of authority and wisdom, and though Jane Austen has plenty of both, I hear instead the voice of Reuben Brower.

Rereading the speech thirty years later confirms what I sort of knew at the time: that, although I was being addressed by a learned man who was not only an Amherst professor but about to move (was it to graduate?) to the fabulous Harvard, it was above all else the tone of voice that captured me. This voice spoke to the assembled classmates—few of whom, including me, were students of Greek or of more than high-school Latin—about how the great mistake in the teaching of Latin had been for teachers to tell students (as I was told in high school) that we should study it in order to gain a better command of English syntax and vocabulary. To this advice Brower replied:

> The cricket-like voices of the elders have grown more strained as fewer and fewer listen, while the unanswerable answers are forgotten. We learn Latin to read Virgil and Catullus, to find out what it was like to be Julius Caesar, to die on the slopes of Vesuvius with the elder Pliny.

The ironic curl in the voice naming the elders' folly, then the "simple" answer "to read Virgil and Catullus," with a serious heightening of tone as it moved up to Pliny and the slopes of Vesuvius—it was wonderfully exhilarating. Even if I was never to learn to read Latin with any skill, or Greek at all, I knew why I should have learned to read them.

At this point I had never officially enrolled in one of Brower's courses, though he had once substituted for an ill colleague in our

✪WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD, Henry Clay Folger Professor of English at Amherst College, is the author of *Frost: A Literary Life Considered.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

section of the sophomore literature course of which he had been the architect. That day consisted of his leading us through Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale," a strenuous go-around as I dimly remember. Brower's upper-class course in literary criticism was rumored to be tough, with good grades hard to come by; meanwhile, I was indulging in political science (thinking that's what incipient lawyers did), with a major in philosophy (thinking, mistakenly, I might become a teacher of it). At any rate I missed Brower until the fall of my senior year when he offered a new course called "English Poetry: Pope to Tennyson," which I determined to audit. In fact, the course began with John Dryden, a poet unknown to me and one whose poems in the fine-looking eighteenth-century anthology edited by R. S. Crane were forbidding—at least until Brower began to read aloud "To the Memory of Mr. Oldham":

> Farewel, too little and too lately known,
> Whom I began to think and call my own;
> For sure our Souls were near ally'd; and thine
> Cast in the same Poetick mould with mine.

Much of his talk about Dryden had to do with what he referred to as "allusive irony," and Brower had already done a memorable job with the couplet from "Mac Flecknoe" about Shadwell ("His Brows thick fogs, instead of glories, grace, / And lambent dullness plaid arround his face"), showing how it parodied ones from the *Aeneid* in which a lambent flame spreads around the brows of Ascanius. In the tribute to Mr. Oldham, the allusion was simpler, an extravagant comparison of a dead English poet, wholly forgotten today, to the nephew of the Emperor Augustus:

> Once more, hail, and farewel; farewel thou young,
> But ah too short, *Marcellus* of our Tongue;
> Thy Brows with Ivy, and with Laurels bound;
> But Fate and gloomy Night encompass thee around.

These lines did not own the complicated, richly verbal texture I had learned to admire in Shakespeare or Keats, nor did the classy classical reference to Marcellus make that much difference. Rather it was, I now see, Brower's calm but sonorous and sympathetic rendering of the lines that made them so telling—the controlled passion of his performance made Dryden, for the first time, a presence to me. A year or so later when I read T. S. Eliot's assertion that "to enjoy Dryden means to pass beyond the limitations of the nineteenth century into a new freedom," that seemed a noble way for me to imagine what by then I thought I had done.

What Brower had done in opening the eighteenth century to me, and what so much of his teaching did, was to instruct by example, especially by the example of the performing voice making a piece of old poetry come alive. His assurance about the worth of what he was reading was so strong, his love—in Robert Frost's phrase—for the particular "figure" made by the poem at hand so great, that you felt yourself to be a peculiarly heavy clod if you could not (as most of us surely could not at the time) participate convincingly in the experience. Yet by trying to like Dryden, by going through the motions of imitating the professor's admiration—right down to imitating his tone of voice—something eventually happened, and one day, lo and behold, there was Dryden on his own, seen plain and heard with pleasure. Of course there were amusing side effects to the whole procedure, as in a moment when, while dealing with some boring piece of eighteenth-century meditative verse about Fancy or Poesy and probably by Gray or Joseph Warton, Brower asked the class whether any of them had read Milton's "L'Allegro" or "Il Penseroso," poetic sources of the later, undistinguished meditation. Two, at most three, members of the class raised their hands—as I shrank lower in my humble auditor's seat. An impatient, slightly put-off, though not terribly surprised look came over Brower's face, a look that I was to see more than once in later years: "Well, for heaven's sake," his voice rising just enough to sound a shade petulant, "go home and read them." I have since tried out this technique on a class, with, I'm afraid, nothing like the success Brower's imperative had on me; for I went home and read, though with less than ecstatic pleasure, the two Milton poems.

I was a small-town boy from upstate New York (Johnson City, right on the Pennsylvania border), full of excitement about uplifting my way out of provinciality by demonstrating that I could respond to the likes of John Dryden. Of course I had no idea at the time that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Reuben Brower had grown up twenty miles or so to the south of me in Lanesboro, Pennsylvania, and indeed had graduated from Binghamton Central High School, our rival up the highway. His father worked for the railroad, and I remember hearing Brower later say that he prepared his lessons while commuting back and forth from Lanesboro to Binghamton on the Erie Railroad. As an undergraduate at Amherst College, he majored in Greek and English, graduating with the quite unbelievable average of 97.3—to my knowledge the highest average recorded for any graduate of the college before or since. He also acted in various theatrical productions and was said to have cut a good figure as Bluntschli in Shaw's *Arms and the Man* (his later regard for Shaw was high). But his most notable moment, at least in legend, occurred when Robert Frost, teaching at Amherst at the time and visiting a colleague's class, asked if any student would care to read aloud an Elizabethan poem by Richard Edwards that began, "In going to my naked bed as one that would have slept." Brower volunteered, and years later in an interview Frost remembered "the way his voice fell into those lines, the natural way he did that very difficult poem with the old quotation 'the falling out of faithful friends is the renewal of love.' " After he finished reading, Frost announced, "I give you *A* for life."

It seems to me a representative anecdote, not so much in the clever *A*-for-life business, as for the emphasis it puts on the centrality of the vocal performance of poetry to Brower's teaching. In my final semester at Amherst, I sat in sometimes on his section of the introductory literature course. T. S. Eliot was the subject of study, and I wanted to be enlightened about "Prufrock" and *The Waste Land.* But instead Brower began with "Portrait of a Lady," and what remains in my memory is his reading of parts of it aloud with a quite exquisite (the word must be used) control of satiric nuance:

> We have been, let us say, to hear the latest Pole
> Transmit the Preludes, through his hair and fingertips.
> "So intimate, this Chopin, that I think his soul
> Should be resurrected only among friends
> Some two or three, who will not touch the bloom
> That is rubbed and questioned in the concert room."
> —And so the conversation slips
> Among velleities and carefully caught regrets . . .

Expecting to hear about how Eliot was the poet of modern civilization in its decline, presider over twentieth-century chaos, I was introduced instead to tones of voice strung together with aplomb so as to create this sound-portrait of a lady. The teacher whose voice held these tones together in a natural way (as Frost put it) was giving a difficult modern poem more ease of access than I had expected. Moreover, he seemed to be enjoying himself, and so did we.

After graduating from Amherst, Brower took a degree at Cambridge in the early 1930s, studying English and classics. It was a heady time to have been there, since I. A. Richards's *Practical Criticism* had just been published, while in 1932 F. R. Leavis's *Scrutiny* began its twenty-one-year career as a magazine. The influence of these two presences on the young man from the provinces (upstate New York, western Massachusetts) was profound; yet he never became prey—at least in my knowledge of him, admittedly years later—to the extremes of Richards's enthusiasms for this or the other linguistic and cultural "project," or to Leavis's aesthetic and cultural bullying—"This is so, isn't it?" (And you'd better believe it.) To Richards's and William Empson's (also in Cambridge at the time) resourceful dealings with the poem as words on the page, unencumbered by the author's name or place in literary history, Brower brought his own philological and classical training. He could "do" a poem at length and in dazzling ways: one of his lectures in the Harvard "slow reading" course he taught many years later consisted of an all-stops-out, fifty-minute treatment of Wordsworth's "Mutability" sonnet. But he also cared about history, particularly about the history of genres; and the course that began by focusing minutely on the sonnet or quatrain would expand not only to a consideration of other genres, such as poetic drama and the novel, but would trace the fortunes of pastoral or the heroic through a sequence of writers and literary periods. To Leavis's insistence on the importance of evaluation, the making of reasoned judgments about why X was preferable to Y, Brower

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

assented, and could on occasion denigrate with verve some piece of inferiority. But he never seemed to care all that much about ranking, and never confused himself, as Leavis did, with a scourge of mass culture or of aesthetic dilettantism. He was no dilettante—he worked too hard for that—but he liked lots of things besides reading and criticism: art, music, theater, the cinema (remember Leavis's scorn as he referred to "the cinema"), just to name a few. Evaluation could also be practiced as a less than life-and-death matter. A friend of mine once wrote to me describing Brower as "a pleasant guy to be around, whether you're talking about Literature and Life or just about something minor and fun like Bea Lillie . . . or the generally bad quality of *canned* green tomato pickles as over against the real article bought in a good delicatessen."

This is a personal account of Reuben Brower's importance as a teacher, rather than a survey of his career and works. Yet any account of his most famous accomplishment as a teacher—the Harvard humanities course called "Interpretation of Literature" (familiarly, Hum. 6)—must be at least partly genetic. Brower had returned to Harvard from Cambridge, England, written his Ph.D. dissertation on Dryden's *Aeneid*, and in collaboration with Brooks Otis, another graduate student at Harvard, edited a lively, short-lived magazine called the *New Frontier*, which combined criticism of literature with criticism of American culture. He taught at Harvard until 1939, when he moved back to Amherst, replacing Harry DeForest Smith in the classics department, but holding the joint title of assistant professor of Greek and English, an unusual—still unusual—title to hold. Brower insisted upon teaching in the English department and at the outset gave a course in literary criticism; then he joined Theodore Baird and G. Armour Craig in a staff course called "English Composition"—surely an odd thing for a classicist to teach. Early along he offered a course in the classics department called "Greek Literature in English," also something out of the ordinary, and in 1942 he directed a staff course (which included his English department colleagues Baird and Craig) called "Reading Poetry and Prose." It was to be Brower's deepest commitment as an English teacher: "The course is devoted to slow reading and detailed analysis of poetry and of prose," said the Amherst catalogue. What it did not say, but what was to remain the single most significant aspect of the staff courses in literature he instigated at Amherst and Harvard, was the devotion to a common reading list and to the exercise method. This meant, first, that no matter whom you had for "section" (the course at its beginnings met partly en masse for lectures), the same book would be under discussion; second, there would be a written assignment on it, not in the form of some free-floating invitation to "discuss" ("An invitation to chaos," said Theodore Baird), but in the shape of a carefully directed exercise.

The "exercises," which I first encountered ten years later and found mainly terrifying, invited, nay demanded, that one locate oneself in relation to specific expressions in the text, as, in the example Brower used in a later essay, to Othello's "Put out the light, and then put out the light." The exercise would consist of a carefully planned series of questions; queries about parallel words and phrases from earlier in the play; an invitation to the student to make connections, and eventually to conclude with a generalization about the kind of literary experience he had undergone. Brower's assumption, on which this first staff course of his was built, was that a work of literature—as he put it later in rationalizing the course—"offers us an experience through words that is different from average, everyday experience. It is different in its mysterious 'wholeness,' and in the number of elements embraced and in the variety and closeness of their relationship." So that when Othello says these words just before he strangles Desdemona, "we feel not only the horror of his intention, but also a remarkable concentration of much that has gone on before: the moving history of the relations between the lovers and between them and Iago, the echoed presence of earlier moments of 'lightness' and 'darkness.' "

This was what Brower ultimately cared about—these wonderful experiences of literature that were to be shared with students who would be guided to them by careful demonstration, coaxing, reading aloud, leading them to a consideration of words and relation-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ships among words. In "Reading in Slow Motion" (from *In Defense of Reading*, a collection of essays by teachers in Hum. 6, edited by Brower and Richard Poirier), Brower described the course most fully. But what couldn't be put down in any essay was the extent to which its cooperative nature provided continuous edge and vitality. The weekly staff meetings in which the class plan was decided upon (very much a "game plan," as the football coaches have it) and the exercises revised and argued over (and *really* argued over in the early days, as Theodore Baird recalls) were absolutely at the heart of the enterprise and kept both students and teachers on the up-and-up. At Amherst after the war, the course was enhanced by C. L. Barber's presence, and there was an important contribution from John Moore of the classics department; later on younger instructors such as Walker Gibson, William R. Taylor, Julian Moynahan, Jonathan Bishop, and Benjamin DeMott did some of their first teaching in it. As the enterprise was a shared responsibility, different people were responsible for guiding different units of a term's syllabus; when your turn came round for six classes on Tennyson's poetry or seven on *Coriolanus*, or three weeks on *The Education of Henry Adams*, you were expected to come up with something interesting, usually in the form of a possible exercise, but also with written-out suggestions for the conduct of individual classes ("poop," as it ingloriously came to be termed) for use by the other members of the staff who just might not approve of your basic approach, taste, tone, and so forth. Of course students had little idea that such things went on behind the scenes; all we knew was that the exercises magically appeared, each one more complicated than the previous. The year I took "Introduction to Literature" at Amherst, we read during the whole first term "only" some lyrics by Wordsworth and Frost, *King Lear*, Jonson's *Volpone* and *The Alchemist*. With three discussion meetings a week, there was time to live with and experience these works in a way that was both leisurely and intense.

It was this thoroughly "Amherst" course that Brower took with him to Harvard when he was appointed professor there in 1953. He took from Amherst not only the spirit and ideals of the enterprise, but also a fat backlog of exercises and other materials useful for the lectures he now had to get up (at first twice, then once a week) for the large body of Harvard undergraduates, mostly freshmen, who soon began to elect "Interpretation of Literature" as their required humanities course. The other courses had titles such as "Epic and Novel" or "Ideas of Good and Evil" or "Man and the World" or "Crisis and the Individual," and they covered a lot of ground, doling out great ideas about Western civilization to the freshmen—with Dostoevski as the inevitably featured star—and concerning themselves very little with critical method and scarcely at all with the activity of reading. So Brower's "slow-motion" focus on reading was looked at with condescension and annoyance by other teachers of literature at Harvard. Some thought it murdering to dissect; Perry Miller simply referred to it as "Remedial Reading"; and I remember a joking reference to it as a course in "How to Talk about Literature Without Actually Knowing Anything." It was suspect also because of the composition of its staff, which, especially in the early days, was still an Amherst operation, filled with graduates of the college. Richard Poirier and Thomas R. Edwards were instrumental in the early planning of the course; Armour Craig chaired it for a semester when Brower went on leave; and William R. Taylor came back from Amherst and taught in it. Old boys (back then it was very much an old-boy network) from Amherst, like William Youngren, Thomas Whitbread, Neil Hertz, Floyd Merritt, Piers Lewis, and me, also taught in it. We were arrogant (I was, anyway) and defensive about the course, feeling that—unlike the rest of benighted Harvard English—*we* were vehicles of truth, bringers of light, at least of the Right Method for going about things. We hadn't, some of us, read all that much, nor had we published. But we certainly liked to talk, to argue, and here the staff course once again took on its life.

Brower now had to lecture much more frequently than he had at Amherst, and to large audiences in the lecture room of Sever or Longfellow Hall. He was not considered, and probably was not, a stunning lecturer; at least there was no spellbinding, not much personal magnetism, almost no joking and jollying-up of the students. His lecturing voice (unlike his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

reading voice) was unexceptional and could on occasion approach a drone. You had to listen, had to pay attention to the book, which should have been in front of you if you had brought it as instructed, and had especially to be attentive during the five or so minutes *after* the bell had rung. For it was then that Brower "tied things together," which meant, in fact, that he made all sorts of connections in somewhat of a rush. I remember trying to scribble down some of them and wondering whether he really saved up his most challenging remarks for that flustered time when the undergraduates were champing at the bit, eager to get to lunch, and snapping their notebooks shut with impatient authority, as if *that* would put an end to things academic for a while. Meanwhile Brower's absorption in what he was doing—putting the last touches to his remarks about Marvell's "On a Drop of Dew," or to the end of James's *Portrait of a Lady*—was complete, and lasted well after the lecture had finally concluded.

The course lasted for twenty years until Brower's death in 1975, and through it passed some extraordinary students and a good many interesting teachers. *In Defense of Reading* shows some of the variety of interest and concern among its contributors, but—as with Brower's own writing—something has been lost in the process of creating the written, rather than the spoken, word. Frost, a major influence on Brower's notion of "voice" in poetry, said that poetry was what got lost in translation. (Brower himself was a lifelong student of translation and edited a volume of essays on the subject, of which his own, "Seven Agamemnons," is a notable one.) In the translation from spoken to written word, from "what went well in class" to its attempted expression on the printed page, something was assuredly lost: the immediacy, the actuality, the intimacy of reading something aloud with a class, pausing here, trying something out there, questioning that inflection and substituting another one—even as skillful a writer as Brower found this a little more than he could get into print.

Another teaching alumnus of the course—and a non-Amherst one—Paul De Man, noted recently in the *Times Literary Supplement* that "the profession is littered with the books which the students of Reuben Brower failed to write." If it does not sound too much like an excuse for laziness, I would hazard that there may be a connection between a scrupulous concern for "voice" in poetry and the teacher's doubt that he can ever be adequate in his own writing to convey the vocal discriminations he may have made in class. "Good readers are often spare writers," as De Man put it. Yet Brower himself wrote a number of books—on Pope, on Frost, on Shakespeare, and (in his first one, *The Fields of Light*) on the whole matter of "slow reading."

Paul De Man's recent essay, "The Return to Philology," referred to above, boldly attempts to link the procedures of Brower's humanities course with those of literary theory as viewed over the last decade or so. In each, De Man argues, there was practiced "an examination of the structure of language prior to the meaning it produces." This practice was subversive of other practices by those who moved too quickly to paraphrasable meanings, and who treated literature as a substitute for disciplines such as theology or ethics or psychology or the history of ideas. Certainly the interests of the Harvard English department in those days were miles away from "close reading"; one learned instead about Elizabethan drama or Christian humanism or American romanticism. Yet in emphasizing Brower's subversiveness and praising the course that expressed it, De Man's polemic in defense of theory leaves out something important. For not only (as he admits) were the course and Brower's major assumptions as a reader-critic of literature "remote from high-powered French theory"—or from any other high-powered theory, for that matter—they were totally different in the "positive" direction they took. A concern with "philology," with the structure of language in a poem or poetic drama, was where things began, certainly. But (as De Man also notes but then ignores) Brower approved of the "ethical" interests he found in Richards and Leavis. He believed further that some poems, some works, were better than other ones and that an objective account of their value could be given and could, indeed, be taught. Though it was never done overtly or even acknowledged, the effect of consistently selecting certain writers and texts for study in the staff courses (Donne rather than Spenser, Keats

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rather than Shelley, Twain rather than Howells, Jane Austen rather than Charlotte Brontë, Fenimore Cooper never) was to establish a canon. *These* (the works chosen for study) were the ones that "taught" well, about which there was a lot to say, much to demonstrate. Brower's subversiveness, that is, stopped well short of theoretical onslaughts on the notion of a canon or on the validity of objectively determinable preferences. To put it in the unlovely language of literary theory, Brower didn't mind "privileging" or "valorizing" certain works of art, and there was damned little "slippage" in his operations. Indeed, as they say these days, it was "elitist"—and that was half the fun.

Brower was an acute reader of one's essays, and when in my second year at Harvard I finally signed up for a course with him—a seminar in Alexander Pope, about whom he was writing a book at the time—I found beneficial the detailed and incisive, if barely legible, remarks he made about particular sentences, not just my paper as a whole. (Such remarks often took the form of check marks in the margin, signifying his assent to a sentence or idea, and giving me the feeling that somebody was actually reading what I had written.) Here was the "philological" concern De Man speaks of, and it was in sharp contrast to the casual, brief expressions of approval that passed for comments from many Harvard English professors (Douglas Bush and Albert J. Guerard were important exceptions). There were also some amusing side effects of such close reading: I strove in my own prose to emulate the man's style and procedures; so since one of the things Brower was, was urbane—I think I first heard the word used by him in relation to Dryden's "Absalom and Achitophel"—I decided that my own urbanity content should be increased. Once I tried out a favorite formulation of his, the sentence that begins "We are reminded of" and then produces some apt allusive reference. When I tried out a rather farfetched comparison that presumably "we" were "reminded" of, he scribbled in the margin, "*Perhaps* we are." This unsettled me, so next time I began the sentence with "Perhaps we are reminded of. . . ." This didn't work either, as Brower noted parenthetically, "Evidently *you* were!" Outfoxed twice, I realized I would have to adopt other means of demonstrating my allusive urbanity: the structure of language was letting me down.

I had often heard Brower lecture on Frost's poetry, and his love of it carried weight for me beyond the local Amherst connection, since Brower loved Yeats, as well, and deeply admired Eliot—though he made interesting demurs about parts of *Four Quartets*, probably resisting what the Anglican concern did to the poetry (Brower was very much a secularist in matters of belief). When I determined to write my dissertation on Frost, I asked him to be principal reader and director. At the time I didn't know he was contemplating a book of his own on the poet, which he published soon after I completed my thesis. His remarks about what I handed him were invariably directed at the writing, rather than at my "readings" of individual poems, and I think this was all to the good since I tended to treat the slightest Frostian lyric as if it were a dialectical struggle to be described in language appropriate to *Hamlet* or *Paradise Lost*. He helped me moderate my solemnities and taught me to wince at some of the critical jargon I employed, such as *structure* used as a verb. And when the dissertation was done and submitted, he helped free me from the guilty worry of how much of it was my own, how much of it, somehow, his, when he wrote to say: "Can I express one final note of relief? I had feared that our readings might sound too much alike if we both presented them to the world. (We reflect so much of the same "Amherstian" experience.) Fortunately they don't, even when we focus on the same poems. Your emphasis and reading is—I'm happy to say, *yours*." Could it be true? I was encouraged to believe so, at any rate, and still feel grateful for his releasing and assuring me.

After I returned to teach at Amherst, I saw Brower infrequently and heard from him only occasionally. But the voice, as it had done from the first, carried authority that was deepened when it struck the personal note that he did not often strike. I found teaching at Amherst a full-time activity, most of it focused in the two composition sections that met Monday through Saturday and presented me with a set of twenty or so papers to read each night for the next morning's class. In the fall of my

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

second year I suddenly and mysteriously contracted pericarditis and had to spend a week in the hospital. Scared and depressed as I felt, a letter from him arrived at just the right time and told me what I needed to hear: "Every young teacher has these moments when the burden seems mountainous. I hope you're not finding 'rest' torture. I have always liked being told I had to be good; it is lovely to have someone else responsible for one's conscience." The part about liking to have to "be good" was fun, but the deeper note came through in the wisdom about the young teacher. Nobody had said this to me before, and as with his response to my dissertation, I said, "Could it be true?" At any rate it provided a new way to look at and partially to free myself from "the burden."

He found himself mainly puzzled and disheartened, I think, by the "student unrest" of the late sixties and early seventies. I remember the tone, though not the details, of a long and troubled account he gave me in 1970 or so of a young woman from Radcliffe who was in his "Modern British Fiction" course and who told him in no uncertain terms that Forster's *Howards End* (always one of Brower's favorite books) was "irrelevant" to whatever the going relevance was at the time. Other turmoils were written about in ways that made them something more than the complaints of age and historical situation:

> Believe it or not, I've been having phlebitis in one leg—terrible nuisance. Was in Stillman [the Harvard infirmary] for a week, but now back in classes, & on limited activity. How much can you do with one leg stretched outright? I feel like a gouty country squire 18c style—And maybe I am!

Here the exclamation was beautifully transforming, the physical nuisance converted into a literary asset. In the bad spring of 1970, after Lionel Trilling had delivered one of his Norton Lectures at Harvard, Cambridge police and dissidents mixed it up with grievous results, and Brower wrote that

> we were tear-gassed (via windows) in A. House S.C.R. [the Senior Common Room of Adams House, of which Brower was a notable Master] while having party for Trillings the night after the riot. Everyone very warm, very brave (& afterward very depressed—I was).

One does not love a place less for having suffered in it, however, and two years later, while speaking at a Harvard ceremonial occasion, Brower concluded his address with the best, and perhaps the only real, account of the ties that bind at Harvard or Amherst or any undergraduate educational institution: "We are held together," he said, "by our common bond with these charming, challenging, invigorating youngsters, who are the true end of all our efforts. . . ." At present, when pious academics are careful always to refer to their students as "men and women," lest they be denying them their human rights, the word *youngsters* is especially to be welcomed; and "invigorating" they were, too, even when they told you that *Howards End* was irrelevant.

I have said nothing here of Brower's continuing interest in classics and the way he infused those interests into the teaching of English literature, particularly vital when the object of study was a genre, such as pastoral or epic. My silence in this regard stems from my own ignorance, so that even as Brower carefully and lovingly described the allusions to Homer or Horace in the poetry of Pope, I felt very much on the outside, looking on wistfully and never doing what had to be done to remedy the situation. But it is my suspicion, though it may be only my provinciality, that his warmest memories of teaching classics—perhaps of teaching anything—date back to his years at Amherst. The suspicion is given some backing by sentences from a letter of 1972, written after the sudden death of John Moore, a much-revered teacher of Greek and Latin and a sometime colleague of Brower:

> His death was a real blow. It marked an end to one whole part of my Amherst life. John, Wendell [Clausen], and I—and later Milman P. [Parry]—were joined in that odd little Classics world, in the far end of Converse Library. *There* we were—& I visualize my Amherst office & study life in & out of those two offices. John shared mine & he was always putting his head in the door, on one side, hopping on one foot, in high form or low. Most clearly I see him at the Greek typewriter, cursing & moaning as he hit another wrong key. He was a person easy to love, and much loved, yet terribly alone.

Three years later Brower himself died, also

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

suddenly. On the program of the service held for him at Harvard's Memorial Church, there was included a patch of lines from Horace's second satire, lines that began

> . . . quandoque licebit
> nunc veterum libris, nunc somno et inertibus horis,
> ducere sollicitae iucunda oblivia vitae?

Underneath the Latin was Brower's rendering of the lines:

> Oh my Sabine farm when shall I see you, when again
> With old authors, with sleep and lazy hours
> Can I find sweet forgetfulness of painful life?

Leaving Amherst, he had spoken of "An Earthly Paradise"; now the theme returned to memorialize his final leave-taking. I was unable to attend that service but treasure as his real last words to me—even though I spoke with him subsequent to receiving them—this flash of truth in a letter thanking me for something I'd written on Virginia Woolf, another favorite of his:

> Your admirable review—very much appreciated. Life goes too quickly. Increasingly I find myself saying—"Was that it?" I can't quite get over Yeats's feeling that it is about to happen.

That he never got over that feeling, and that he could find such right words for it, was testimony to his continuing restlessness as a reader and scholar, but pre-eminently as a teacher.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Last Words of Don Quixote

"I am no longer Don Quixote de la Mancha"

PAUL PETRIE

All the heroes have turned
into sheep.
All the ladies, the lovely ladies
into serving girls.
All the giants
to windmills.

The enchanter has waved his wand.
The enchantment's
through.

One suit of wrinkled armor
I bequeath to the moon,
one splintered lance
to the waves,
one mud-bespattered shield
to the mockery of crows.

Trees melt on the hills.
Hills fade off into clouds.
Shadows
turn
to shadows.

It is time to be serious, to abandon
folly, to seek out
the soul.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Tips of oak trees blaze
in the obsequies
of sunlight.

White faces peer
through the loopholes
of stars.

And again
the quest begins.

Without the magic of names,
stripped of all masks and disguises,
I must encounter
the real.

PAUL PETRIE teaches in the English department at the University of Rhode Island. He is the author of, among other books of poetry, *Not Seeing Is Believing* and *Light from the Furnace Rising*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mrs. Post, May I Present Mr. Eliot

WYLIE SYPHER

The first edition of *Emily Post's Etiquette* appeared in July 1922, and by August 1923 there were eight reprintings of this work, which was said to be, with the Bible, the largest-selling book in the United States at that time. In 1922, also, Boni and Liveright in New York reprinted a thousand copies of Eliot's *Waste Land*, which, during the following year, was issued in England by the Hogarth Press after it had appeared in *The Criterion* in October 1922. By November 1928, Eliot printed *For Lancelot Andrewes* with its prefatory note that he considered himself a classicist in literature, a royalist in politics, and an Anglo-Catholic in religion, a statement that was to haunt him.

The dates are indicative. It may seem ludicrous to propose that, at two quite distinguishable planes of American social history, Mrs. Post and T. S. Eliot represent a characteristic quest for tradition, for ritual, for a usable past in a society where the middle class had established itself economically but had the uncomfortable sense that it lacked "culture."

Eliot's expatriation was spiritual and intellectual as well as geographic (this geographic estrangement he shared with Henry James, Ezra Pound, and often Hemingway). Mrs. Post expatriated herself by living in New York. Eliot, in spite of his sometimes pontifical tone, was uneasy in his expatriation; Mrs. Post had the full security of the American moneyed class but was deprived of the sensitivity and acumen of Edith Wharton, that other exile in the American metropolis.

Eliot's malaise is testified to in his own rueful verses:

> How unpleasant to meet Mr. Eliot!
> With his features of clerical cut,
> And his brow so grim
> And his mouth so prim
> And his conversation, so nicely
> Restricted to What Precisely
> And If and Perhaps and But.

Eliot had the unsettling experience of encountering in Bloomsbury the disabused judgments of a generation that had begun to say good-bye to all that. Stephen Spender records Eliot's confrontation with Virginia Woolf at tea in Tavistock Square: "Did he go to church? Yes. Did he hand round the plate for the collection? Yes. Oh, really! Then what did he experience when he prayed?" Eventually Eliot triumphed, but the cost is graven in his often-tormented poetry and his, at moments, grim and pious comedy. The comedy in Emily Post is unrefined: as when at the dinner given by the bride, the soup is like dishwater, the maid piles the plates on one another, the fish has a gutter of water around the edge, and Mrs. Kindheart says gently, "Cheer up, little girl, it doesn't really matter."

In a scathing passage Trotsky remarked: "Style is class—not alone in art, but above all in politics." There is a politics of "culture," the culture sought in two different arenas by Eliot and Emily Post. The problem they share is crudely phrased in *Etiquette* in the chapter about making one's place in society, and it is more ponderingly considered in Eliot's essays on earning one's tradition. Tradition, Eliot explains, must be obtained by great labor, and "the more tardy must sweat for it." It requires a historical sense of the presence of the past. Writing for the Middletown person who does not have the right inheritance, who must "acquire" a standing among "persons of position," Mrs. Post warns that acceptance by The Best Society "is a long and slow road to

WYLIE SYPHER is professor of English emeritus at Simmons College and author of, among other books, *The Ethic of Time: Structures of Experience in Shakespeare* and *Loss of the Self: In Modern Literature and Art*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

travel." One begins the climb by joining the right church, the right civic activities, the right clubs. "Social position is gained usually at a snail's pace," and one must, above all, not push or presume. ("And how should I presume?" asks Prufrock.) Mrs. Post cautions that an "outsider" enters only by making herself "eligible," perhaps through charitable work, until Mrs. Oldname accepts her after she has been thrown among "ladies of good breeding."

Since Eliot and Mrs. Post are engaged in a quest for a usable past, they both are attracted by a hierarchical social order. Mrs. Post believes that "The Best Society abroad is always the oldest aristocracy," as in the United States it "is represented by social groups which have had, since this is America, widest rather than longest association with the old-world cultivation." The Best Society "is comparatively rich," though the "less affluent sister" through her "quality of birth, her poise, her inimitable distinction, is often the jewel of deeper water."

Mrs. Post's notion of The Best Society as an "unlimited brotherhood which spreads over the entire surface of the globe" corresponds to Eliot's notion (adopted from Coleridge) that a Christian society is composed of a "clerisy" of men and women who, having a certain "way of life," are a minority given to right reason. Mrs. Post translates this as being "an association of gentlefolk, of which good form in speech, charm of manner, knowledge of the social amenities, and instinctive consideration for the feelings of others are the credentials by which society the world over recognizes its chosen members." The Best Society is a more secular cognate of Eliot's community of Christians. Mrs. Post takes good manners to be precepts "so thoroughly absorbed as to make their observance a matter of instinct rather than of conscious obedience." In defining the Christian community, Eliot grants that its members have small capacity for thinking about their faith, and yet "their Christianity may be almost wholly realized in behavior; both in their customary and periodic religious observances, and in a traditional code of behavior towards their neighbors." In the Christian society, religion is "primarily a matter of behavior and habit," integrated with social life, business, and pleasure.

Essentially, Mrs. Post and Eliot are provincials who are aware of the disabilities of provincialism. Eliot is aware of his own felt provincialism; Mrs. Post is aware only of the provincialism of others. Both, in their own way, attempt to modify and reform what Matthew Arnold (another apostle of culture) termed "the provincial spirit," which has no "standard at hand" by which to appraise ideas and conduct. In lecturing to the Virgil Society in 1945, Eliot regretted our parochial "distortion of values, the exclusion of some, the exaggeration of others, which springs, not from lack of wide geographic perambulation, but from applying standards acquired within a limited area to the whole of human experience." Mrs. Post and Eliot are distressed by what Arnold called the rawness of the Philistines, whom they would redeem by a code of behavior.

In such a community of either Christians or The Best Society, manners are an ethic, as they were for Jane Austen, another writer seeking to refine a middle class that had consolidated itself financially but not culturally. In spite of prescriptions about which forks to use, and when, Mrs. Post insists that etiquette includes "ethics as well as manners." In kindred vein Eliot the ritualist asserts that "behavior is as potent to affect belief, as belief to affect behavior." And he adds, "We know that good manners, without education, intellect, or sensibility to the arts, tends towards mere automatism."

By reading the early editions of *Etiquette*, we realize the instability of the context within which the young Eliot wrote: as an American alienated from America, but indigenously American in his need for a controlling ritual. His difference from Mrs. Post is evident in *Etiquette*, which culminates in her discussion of Country House Hospitality, where she observes that "all people of good position talk alike, behave alike, and live alike." Meanwhile Eliot was recommending his Impersonal Theory of Poetry, which is a mode of depersonalizing or a suppression of the poet by surrender to his medium. Hugh Kenner identified Eliot as an Invisible Poet; Wyndham Lewis called Eliot an Incarnate Echo. Yet, in his very plea for tradition and impersonality, Eliot insisted that poetry must be based not only on a consciousness of past poetry but also upon a personal modulation of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"feelings" for phrases and images that endow verse with an intensity, a privacy, of individual response. His essay was titled "Tradition and the Individual Talent."

Mrs. Post relies, so to speak, upon an impersonal rhetoric of conduct alone, making behavior so automatic that those in The Best Society are versions of *l'homme machine*. The gentleman or lady is for Mrs. Post a figure of what is now termed cyborg art, the ingenious creation of automated constructs that so successfully animate the mechanism that it resembles the human being. It is ironic that amid an American society given to free enterprise there should appear a code of gentility so prescriptive that, as Mrs. Post designates, no gentleman can carry a bundle (he can, however, carry "very neat packages," flowers, or a basket of fruit). Nor can a butler ever, ever have a mustache. A lady, Mrs. Post advises, must sit "in the center of her chair, or slightly sideways in the corner of a sofa. She may lean back, of course, and easily; her hands relaxed in her lap, her knees together. . . . On informal occasions she can lean back in an easy chair with her hands on the arms." In all such matters the Southern Lady is the model: "Southern women always bow with the grace of a flower bending in the breeze and a smile like sudden sunshine." Above all, at any party, the lady, Northern or Southern, will "never go upstairs to a bedroom." Also, "Never put your hand on a man, except in dancing. Don't allow anyone to paw you." The gentleman is more entirely automated. He offers his arm (he never *takes* a lady's arm unless to assist her into her motor), and he commands the bow of ceremony, in which he "looks at the person he is bowing to. In a very formal standing bow, his heels come together, his knees are rigid and his expression is rather serious." There is also the informal bow when he raises his hat "high enough to escape the head easily," bringing his derby a few inches forward.

All such rituals are precautionary, if not defensive. Especially in his possum mood Eliot was notoriously coy, guarded; and unhappily he sometimes assumed too patrician an air. In her sections on salutations, Mrs. Post cautions about persons one should avoid meeting; at the direst times, one resorts to "the cut direct." Ordinarily, however, one can avoid rudeness by reserve: "You can be courteously polite and at the same time extremely aloof to a stranger who does not appeal to you." Ladies must be carefully remote. No gentleman ever introduces to ladies a youth he knows nothing about, but will frankly say, "There is a man called Sliders who has asked to meet you. I don't know who he is, but he seems decent. Shall I introduce him?"

But noblesse oblige. Eliot and Mrs. Post alike endorse a breeding that allows for democracy without being democratic. Eliot tolerates Sweeney and Bleistein with his cigar as "migrant" figures as long as they do not weaken the "homogeneity of race" in a community. Eliot probably both meant and didn't mean what he said as much as Mrs. Post meant and didn't mean what she said when she urged courtesy to servants: "To be courteously polite, and yet keep one's walls up, is a thing every thoroughbred person knows how to do." For "a well-bred person always lives within the walls of his personal reserve; a vulgarian has no walls." She speaks of "the honorable vocation of a servant." Besides, "some faces look well under a cap."

A paradox in American culture is inherent in a situation where anyone earning his living in a bank should finally lament that our essential faith is only in compound interest, and also in a situation where one insists that money is "not essential to social position," though one can hardly maintain a social position without having at least two servants. Yet Eliot never did, like Mrs. Post looking from the Tuxedo Club, suppose that good taste is spreading across the hinterland now that "white tiled bathrooms have sprung up like mushrooms seemingly in a single night."

In her optimism about plumbing, Mrs. Post has returned from her aristocratic code of The Best Society to Middletown, that native and authentic American scene. She even ventures promise of a "Golden Age that is sure to be." Eliot, more steadily Brahmin in his estrangement, fears a decline to a period that "will have *no* culture." He continues to wince at Mr. Eugenides with his currants c.i.f. London, and at the empty bottles, sandwich papers, cigarette ends in the Thames—testimonies to summer nights of demotic fun. In "Preludes" Eliot has a vision of the street that the street hardly understands.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Phantom Ghost of Modernism

GEORGE WATSON

A ghost called Modernism stalks our literary world.

Hardly the real thing, since not many in Anglo-America nowadays are seriously trying to write poems like *The Waste Land* or novels like *Ulysses;* and the *nouveau roman* has not lasted in Paris. It is critics, by and large, not creators, who since the 1960s have returned to the doubts, agonies, and skepticisms about language fashionable between the two world wars among the followers of T. S. Eliot and James Joyce. In academe, above all, Modernism is back.

Hamlet reminds us that a returning spirit is supposed to have a story to tell. I want to ask what the Modernist ghost has to tell us, sixty years on and more, and whether we should heed it.

Modernism has returned with a difference. The doubts, agonies, and skepticisms of the "Men of 1914," as Wyndham Lewis called them—meaning, above all, T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and himself—were about *justifying* claims to knowledge rather than with the far more radical skepticisms that were to dog the 1960s. Man can and does know, in the 1914 view: he merely finds it difficult or impossible to explain how he does so. And in later Modernism, in the 1930s, that near impossibility could convert into the very matter of poems and novels, as in Eliot's *Four Quartets* or Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*. Epistemological doubt ceased to be an agony and became something like a boast.

One salient doctrine of literary Modernism was that a great poem could not without fatal loss be translated, paraphrased, or explained. "Poetry is what gets lost in translation," Robert Frost is alleged to have said. That remark, whether he made it or not, is perhaps the best quick summary of the school that we have. It may be presumed a part of T. E. Hulme's conversational legacy to Ezra Pound in the 1910s. It is certainly there in his posthumous *Speculations* (1924): "Images in verse are not mere decoration, but the very essence of an intuitive language"; and since that view smacks of late nineteenth-century French symbolism, it is reasonable to guess that Hulme had picked it up in Paris. That it was a late romantic doctrine of poetic language seems not to have discouraged the passionate advocate of a new classicism: Hulme took his perceptions where he found them. And Pound did not reject the view. Though a master of poetic translation, he saw it as a rigorous exercise in pastiche rather than the faithful reflection of an original—an act calculated only to widen the gap between original and translation and to underline the uniqueness of each.

By the 1920s and after, Eliot's formulations of the principle of untranslatability make it clear that it was to be understood in some absolute and unnegotiable sense. "It is commonplace," he remarked in a late lecture of 1942, "to observe that the meaning of a poem may wholly escape paraphrase." With that "wholly" Eliot apparently spurned any prospect of compromise—the hopeful notion, for example, that a paraphrase might be helpful but not sufficient. This was defiant stuff and strong meat. And if it was commonplace by 1942, it had been contentiously proclaimed many years earlier. In the unpublished Cambridge lectures of 1926 on the Metaphysical poets, for example, Eliot had distinguished three ways by which thought can turn into

GEORGE WATSON is the editor of the *New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature* and a fellow in English at St. John's College, Cambridge.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

poetry: by elegant truisms like "Gather ye rosebuds . . . "; by exposition, as in Pope's *Essay on Man;* and by an act of original intellection, Hulme-style, as in Dante or Donne, where a great image stands indispensably as thought itself, newly minted, irreplaceable, and unique. That last is of course the supreme poetic act: "poetic thought," as he called it years later, as opposed to mere prose conviction, which he calls "the thought of a poet." In the supreme grandeur of such poetic thought, form and content are inseparable. Little use, then, ever to ask what the meaning of a poem is.

All that, however interpreted, plainly leaves great poetry honored in the possession of meaning. Modernism even enhanced its claim to meaning, since it proposed uniqueness in place of translatability. There is no substitute for leather, it is said; and in Modernism there was no substitute for literature. All that is light-years away from the radical skepticisms of the 1960s. Contrast, for example, Roland Barthes's sweeping claim in *Le degré zéro de l'écriture* (1965) that modern poetry "destroys the spontaneously functional nature of language, and leaves only its lexical basis," words being emptied of their content and grammar shown as bereft of all purpose outside itself. Eliot and Valéry did not believe that, or behave as if they believed it; and if by modern poetry Barthes means such poets as these, then he gravely misreports them. The early Modernist held that it was teasingly difficult, indeed, to believe in language as instrumental of meaning; and more than difficult—perhaps even impossible—to explain its relation to thought and reality. But he still believed that those relations were there.

If the French New Criticism of the 1960s was the child of interwar Modernism, then it was a child that mocked and belied its own parentage. And that is no way to behave to a ghost. *La Nouvelle Critique* was a sort of juvenile-delinquent child of Anglo-American New Criticism. Its mocking denial went nowhere further than in its reckless rejection of meaning. For the Eliotian, poetic meaning had been a touchstone. "Poetry *is* meaning," that lifelong and inveterate Eliotian F. W. Bateson was fond of saying with memorable emphasis, quoting Coleridge's remark about the best words in the best order. That the meaning of a great poem is ultimately unsayable except in its own terms in no way weakens that conviction. On the contrary: a poem is all the more precious if it cannot without loss be offered in any other terms. Modernism dignified literature.

But it also made its meaning endlessly difficult of approach. That may help to explain why its critical successors in the 1960s reacted in so impatient and inaccurate a way. If we cannot say what the relation between language and reality is, the *nouveau critique* concluded, then we do not know what it is; and if we do not know, then it is not there. Not a persuasive case, that, as stripped down to its bare bones and exposed to view. But then interwar Modernism could make for impatience. By the 1950s, if not earlier, it had come to seem something of a charmed circle, its acolytes proudly armed with talismans like Eliot's *Sacred Wood* and uttering invulnerable slogans like, "A poem should not mean but be"; and such spectacles do naturally stir to impulsive reactions. Put up or shut up, its skeptics may naturally have come to feel. It was, after all, a sort of chastity-belt notion of literature—a doctrine of literary language smugly concerned with its own inviolability and protected against any attempt to accost, or question, or board.

It could also lead to a characteristic incuriosity. Happy in the pursuit of the butterflies of ambiguity, the Modernist critic never wanted to be told in blunt terms what anything meant. That would have spoiled the chase. Nor was one ever encouraged to investigate the merely human origins of the faith. When an entirely respectful play about the tragedy of Eliot's first marriage was shown in a London theater early in 1984—Michael Hastings's *Tom and Viv*—a host of disciples in the columns of the *London Review of Books* (March–April 1984) declared their outrage at the sacrilege and their virtuous determination never to read it or see it. That the life and reputation of a dead poet might be in the public domain had plainly never occurred to them; that Eliot, being a man, might be fallible, was a possibility they did not wish to entertain. The critical crisis over *Tom and Viv* showed that, late in the day as it is, Modernism is still a faith and a cause: an impressively well-armored and self-protected doctrine that repels any offer, however friendly, to probe or to question.

That armor derives above all from the Mod-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The 1984 Phi Beta Kappa Book Awards

The Phi Beta Kappa Award in Science

FROZEN STAR: OF PULSARS, BLACK HOLES AND THE FATE OF STARS. *George Greenstein. Freundlich Books. $16.95.*

Citation: *Frozen Star* is a book on the marvels of modern astrophysics—mostly pulsars, black holes, and X-ray astronomy. Its real purpose is to get people to see that there is nothing cold and impersonal about the way scientific work is conducted. The book is not only extremely well written, but it possesses a quality that few books about science have: namely, it captures the confused, unplanned, marvelous, and fascinating process by which real scientists make real discoveries. The author is blunt in his appraisal of others and, at the same time, compassionate, for he exposes the doubt and uncertainty that permeate the scientific endeavor. The result is a fascinating book, particularly for one who lacks special knowledge of this field. Dr. Greenstein is to be congratulated for having achieved the very difficult task of making his field of science available to the intelligent layman.

The Christian Gauss Award

SWIFT: THE MAN, HIS WORKS, AND THE AGE. *Volume 3.* DEAN SWIFT. *Irvin Ehrenpreis. Harvard University Press. $35.*

Citation: In this biography, Irvin Ehrenpreis firmly situates Swift, an extremely complex man, within complex social, political, and personal circumstances and events, and his presentations of man, works, and times coalesce. By the bold procedure of organizing the biography into narrative sequences concerning such separate topics as the Church, the Deanship, and Gentry and Journeys, masses of material are kept under firm control. Every detail—whether of Swift's friends, his enemies, or the secret maneuvering to publish major works—directly serves the reader's comprehension of Swift's intellect, sensibility, and actions. The committee for the Gauss prize considered officially only the third and final volume, entitled *Dean Swift*, which gives an account first of the disappointed exile, then of the Irish patriot at peak performance, and finally of the declining years. Standing tall on the shoulders of the best critics and scholars from Swift's day to ours and drawing on his own searches through manuscripts and newspaper accounts previously neglected and his own strong and sound intelligence, Irvin Ehrenpreis has succeeded in his announced aim of revealing "unexpected connections and relationships."

The Ralph Waldo Emerson Award

AGAINST THE APOCALYPSE: RESPONSES TO CATASTROPHE IN MODERN JEWISH CULTURE. *David G. Roskies. Harvard University Press. $20.*

Citation: There are some books that grasp the reader with the first sentence and never let go. Such is the case of *Against the Apocalypse: Responses to Catastrophe in Modern Jewish Culture* by David G. Roskies. "There are said to be Moroccan Jews," the book begins, "who have kept the keys to their ancestral homes in fifteenth-century Spain and Portugal." These keys become for the author a metaphor of the memory of catastrophe in Jewish thought from the First Destruction of the Temple through the Holocaust. It is that collective memory, the book argues with a power at once scholarly and poetic, that has enabled the Jewish people to triumph over destruction and despair. The book focuses on the "lost temple" of eastern European Jewry in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During this period the traditional apocalyptic response to catastrophe, which combined terror, lament, and despair, was vigorously challenged by Jewish writers, artists, and intellectuals who resorted to strategies of irony, irreverence, laughter, and revenge to cope with persecution and suffering. *Against the Apocalypse* is a work of deep learning, literary sensibility, and critical judgment. It rises above mere scholarship, however. Written with intense self-consciousness and with "controlled passion," it is a work of moral and intellectual commitment as well.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Brooklyn College

"A Bright Spot" in American Higher Education

Cited by the
National Endowment
for the Humanities report
"To Reclaim a Legacy"
November, 1984.

Brooklyn College
The City University of New York
Brooklyn, New York

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

TROY STATE UNIVERSITY

TROY, ALABAMA

FOUNDED 1887

IS CONTINUING ITS EMPHASIS ON FACULTY DEVELOPMENT AND ESPECIALLY WELCOMES INQUIRIES FROM MEMBERS OF PHI BETA KAPPA

RALPH W. ADAMS
President

Austin College

People, values and ideas are important at Austin College. That's why Austin College offers a people- and idea-oriented education, and that's why Austin College enjoys an enviable reputation as an outstanding liberal arts college.

What does that mean to you as a prospective student? It means that at Austin College you are encouraged to look inward . . . to develop your ideas and values as you encounter those of others . . . to examine the exciting possibilities for your personal development . . . to achieve your potential as an individual.

If people, values and ideas are important to you, write:

Admissions Office
Austin College
900 North Grand
Sherman, Texas 75090
(214) 892-9101

TCU
TEXAS CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

To learn more about person-centered education at a doctoral-granting middle-sized university of recognized quality, write: Dean of Admissions, TCU, Fort Worth 76129.

TCU policies apply equally regardless of sex, religion, handicap, race or ethnic origin.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BRYN MAWR

Post-Baccalaureate Premedical Program

Intensive science study for non-scientists who wish to become physicians. Joint acceptance programs with four medical schools and one dental school.

Bryn Mawr College
Division of Special Studies
Bryn Mawr,
Pennsylvania 19010
(215) 645-6197

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY · CHICAGO · 1870

Three campuses in metropolitan Chicago offer prospective students a choice of

39 bachelor's degrees,
30 master's degrees,
the Ph.D. in 17 areas,
and degrees from
7 professional schools.

Loyola University of Chicago —our name affirms a great university's commitment to a great city.

Loyola University of Chicago
820 North Michigan Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60611

An equal opportunity educator and employer.

BRYN MAWR

Summer Sessions

BRYN MAWR COLLEGE offers the opportunity for intensive study during the summer sessions in Essential Sciences (Biology, Chemistry, Physics), Calculus, and Vital Languages (Arabic, Chinese, German, Italian, Russian, Spanish). The College welcomes qualified women and men from other colleges, high school graduates who have not begun their college careers, gifted high school students, men and women who may wish to return to school or take a special interest course, as well as students who regularly attend Bryn Mawr College. The Program is divided into two sequential sessions. **For the Sciences and Calculus: June 3–July 8, July 10–August 16. For the languages: June 10–July 8, July 10–August 9.** Each session is equivalent to one full semester and carries four semester hours of credit. **For information; applications: *Summer Sessions* Division of Special Studies BRYN MAWR COLLEGE Bryn Mawr, Pa. 19010 (215) 645-6197/98**

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A tradition of academic excellence . . . pioneering research . . . innovative programs . . .

THE UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

Advanced, first-professional, and undergraduate degrees . . . 16 schools . . . 4 major and 10 special centers . . . 4 regional campuses. The University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA 15260.

VIRGINIA WESLEYAN COLLEGE

An Exciting Academic Village Concept

Coeducational
Fully Accredited
Four-year Liberal Arts Curriculum
Emphasis on Individual Student
Beautifully wooded, 300-acre campus

For further information, write:

Admission Office
Virginia Wesleyan College
Norfolk/Virginia Beach, VA 23502
(804) 461-3232

JERSEY CITY STATE COLLEGE
Jersey City, New Jersey

A four year co-educational, fully accredited, multi-purpose institution offering 19 Bachelor of Arts, 1 Bachelor of Fine Arts, 9 Bachelor of Science, 9 Master of Arts, 2 Master of Science programs, and 7 graduate certification programs.

Urban setting and orientation . . . . five miles from New York City.

Write: Director of Admissions
2039 Kennedy Boulevard
Jersey City, New Jersey 07305

MONTANA TECH

recognized quality education for mineral-related careers.

Engineering Fields

Environmental
Geological
Geophysical
Metallurgical
Mineral Processing
Mining
Petroleum
Engineering Science

Related Fields

Business Administration
Chemistry + Geochemistry
Computer Science
Mathematics
Occupational Safety and Health
Society and Technology
Professional and Technical Communications
Technology and Public Policy
Human Values and Technology

Admissions Office
Montana Tech
Butte, MT 59701

RHODES COLLEGE

FOUNDED 1848 • FORMERLY SOUTHWESTERN AT MEMPHIS

- 1050 students, coeducational, student/faculty ratio of 12:1
- 26 majors areas of study and 16 Interdisciplinary majors leading to B.A. and B.S. degrees
- Acceptance rate of graduates to schools of law, dentistry, business and international studies has been 100% over a several year period; the acceptance rate to medical schools has been consistently over 90%
- One of the largest merit scholarship programs per student in the U.S. and extensive financial aid provisions

for further information, call:
1-800-238-6788 toll free
In state call 1-901-726-3700
or write, Admissions Office
2000 N. Parkway
Memphis, TN 38112

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ernist dogma that great poetic utterance, like Dante's or Donne's, is untranslatable into other terms. There is, in that view, a sort of "ghost in the machine" of great poetry; which is why, in my title, I suggest that Modernism may be ghostly in more senses than one. It is insubstantial even for a ghost. Unlike Hamlet's father, this returning spirit refuses to speak clearly or tell us what to do. And it is of no use to question it, in the very nature of the case, as Hamlet once questioned his returning parent. For if a poem can only be expressed in its own terms, then to ask what it is about is to ask a question always disallowed. Nor does the usual distinction between prose and verse operate here, since much of what Pound and Eliot proclaimed as critical truth they proclaimed in verse. If meaning can "wholly" escape paraphrase, as Eliot said, then there can be no point in asking for a paraphrase or in venturing one's own. Modernism cannot be interrogated, then; it can only be swallowed whole, much as the cult members of the Moonies swallow the claims of their church. That is not because its literature is about nothing, as the 1960s formalists seem to have imagined, but because it is about something so important that any bid to paraphrase could only falsify what is there.

If all that smacks of self-importance, as it must, it may also help to explain the elaborate strategies of modesty that Eliot employed, in verse and prose alike, to ward off that entirely natural suspicion. Eliot is our great poetic master of modesty—none greater:

> That was a way of putting it—not very satisfactory,

he abruptly slips into *East Coker* (1940), after a moment of poetic inflation:

> A periphrastic study in a worn-out poetical fashion,
> Leaving one still with the intolerable wrestle
> With words and meanings. The poetry does not matter.

Backtracking like that, highly Eliotian as it is—"By this I do not mean to say that . . . "—surely deserves, even at this distance, something more sympathetic than a smile. Eliot was a good man as well as a great one, and a nice man as well as good; and he lived by choice in a nation where self-recommenda-

The College of
WOOSTER

An independent collegial community, concerned for standards, a place dedicated to the mind and to the spirit.

Upperclass Independent Study program since 1946

B.A., B.M., and B. Mus.Ed. degrees

Extensive internship and off-campus work/study programs

Kappa of Ohio Chapter of Phi Beta Kappa

Information: Admissions Office Rm.A., The College of Wooster, Wooster, OH 44691

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion, to be forgiven at all, needs to be expertly disguised.

Eliot's problem was real, after all. A great man is always likely to have noticed that he is that. And a great poet who sets out to reclaim poetry from triviality cannot, in the end, fudge the fact that he is claiming to offer mighty truths. What to do? Insert modest disclaimers, he may have resolved, that no perceptive reader is meant in the end to take literally. And, in the end, we do not take Eliot's claim to have found the wrestle with words and meanings intolerable. He chose to practice it, after all, for over half a century; and he must occasionally have noticed that he practiced it well.

But if great poems are untranslatable, and if you offer your own as nothing less than great, then you must forever deny any sort of attempt to explain. Explanation is reduction. Hence the vatic style of late Eliot, punctured by moments of self-effacing disavowal. If there are ever occasions when mock modesty is a good idea, Modernism was surely one of them. No wonder if it was fond of writing poems about how nearly impossible it is to write a poem, or novels about how nearly impossible to write a novel. Near impossibility was at once its dogma and its defense.

But can we believe the Modernist ghost? I approach this question head-on, though shyly conscious that no head-on battle can be won or lost in such a matter. No use asking what the ghost means, since his utterances (as he often reminds us) are immune to paraphrase. And if that sounds desperately like an impasse, it may be that we should not take that road at all—or at least that we should try one or two other roads as well. Better, perhaps, to outflank and surround, in the hope of wearing down an outer defense or two. Modernism is not an enemy, after all: merely an old friend who may in age have grown over-complacent and too big for his boots.

I simply do not believe, as a teacher, that great literature is unparaphrasable or untranslatable, except in a sense so absolute as to be patently overdrawn. We do it to the Bible, after all; indeed most of us know Scripture in no other way. As for modern literature, I have paraphrased and translated too many poems, and watched others paraphrase and translate too many, to believe that poetry is "what gets lost" when you do so. If it is objected that those who spend their lives in that way could hardly be expected to think otherwise, I accept the jibe at its face value, and only wish it were true. Some teachers of literature are themselves Modernists, after all; and the contradiction is one they should be invited to confront. It can help, in life, to believe that you are achieving something, and encouraging others to achieve something, as opposed to merely claiming or pretending to do so. Teachers and translators need feel no shame. If the whole Modernist claim were true, it would after all have shattering implications for any system of literary education that there is. It is a mark of seriousness in argument to be ready to follow a conviction where it leads and to accept its consequences, however unpalatable, when one gets there.

The Modernist bluff might be called down in practical terms. There is a telling parody of a Modernist instructor in Mary McCarthy's early campus-novel *The Groves of Academe* (1953). The instructor is a nice, naive young woman called Domna, and she regularly preaches the inseparability of form and content to her classes. For the good of the college, a friendly colleague has to call Domna off her high horse. "Content *can* be paraphrased," he remarks in affectionate exasperation; and the effect of denying that has been to starve students of intellectual substance and to turn them into "sophisticated hollow men without general ideas." Eliot once wrote a poem against hollow men, and that cannot have been what he wanted. But it is what he got. It is what we all got. There were those in the 1940s and 1950s who (in Kenneth Tynan's undergraduate phrase) had been bitten by the tsetse fly; and one remembers them still as the burnt-out cases of our literary culture.

On a longer view, classic Modernism was a decadent version of literary humanism. By *humanism* here I am referring to the view familiar since the European Renaissance that meaning is the principal justification of literature and moral guidance the principal object of meaning. That was the fundamental insistence of Sidney's *Apology* and of the Italian humanists from whom he borrowed; and that was the view—though not the unwavering view—of Dryden, Samuel Johnson, Wordsworth, and Matthew Arnold.

Modernism departed from classic human-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ism in its insistence on unique formulations—in its disdain for translatability. That was its innovation, though it was not without its precursors. Shelley, a critical source Eliot would not happily have acknowledged, had spoken in *A Defence of Poetry* of "the vanity of translation," and compared it with casting a violet into a crucible. But one can better judge how substantively innovative Modernism was by comparing it to Samuel Johnson. Johnson held that it could be a serious objection to a poem to show that it could not be translated. "The lines are in themselves not perfect," he commented severely on *Cooper's Hill* in his "Life of Denham" (1779):

> for most of the words thus artfully opposed are to be understood simply [i.e., literally] on one side of the comparison, and metaphorically on the other; and if there be any language which does not express intellectual operations by material images, into that language they cannot be translated.

That passage refers to Denham's famous account of the flowing Thames: "Though deep, yet clear; though gentle, yet not dull; / Strong without rage, without o'erflowing, full." In a brisk defense of translatability, Johnson carries the humanist credo of an indivisible moral world to its extreme, even outrageous, conclusion. To minds educated on nostrums like Eliot's or Frost's—"Poetry is what gets lost in translation"—the suggestion is so alien that one gropes eagerly for an escape hatch. The whole notion is sheerly unnerving. Can Johnson be teasing?

Not at all. If the common understanding of mankind outstrips, in its lasting interest, any merely historical, regional, or individual difference, then translatability *is* after all a necessary condition of great literature. It is a hard doctrine; hard because its very premise, for modern man, is so hard. And so are its consequences. It would utterly forbid punning or equivocation, for one thing, like the coruscating language-play of Joyce's late prose; just as it explains Johnson's celebrated contempt for Shakespearean puns in his preface of 1765. The doctrine looks all the harder when we notice that Johnson refers here not only to literary languages commonly known to learned opinion, but to any language there could ever be, whether real or imagined. In French, as it happens, *profond* and *clair* do have metaphorical senses much like those of *deep* and *clear* in English, when applied to what Johnson calls "intellectual operations." But that appeal would not have satisfied him. It would have to work for Hottentot, too; and it would have to work for any language you cared to invent, like Esperanto. In other words (since humanism encourages us to use other words), the literary property Modernism prized most dearly—whatever it is that inheres in a given language at a given time—was something the classic humanist could reject outright as contingent, transitory, and trivial.

It is a contrast to give thought. Why has our own century chosen to lay so approving an emphasis on the distinctive capacities of a given language at a given moment to speak wisdom to its time? A great language can surely speak folly. Eliot sometimes sniffs around that issue, both in verse and prose, as one understandably troubled by what he might find there. But his voice is muffled. In *East Coker* he calls his efforts in the 1920s and 1930s "largely wasted," and speaks of his grasp of English, which most of us would think enviable, as "shabby equipment always deteriorating"; and it is characteristically hard here to sort out the modesty from the conviction. Yet he nowhere appears to imply that there could ever be any instrumentality better than poetic language to proclaim urgent and profound truths to a troubled time. For Eliot, language teaches, being the best there is. A troubled humanist, then; but a humanist still.

A few years later André Gide joined in the chorus for the inviolable truth of a native tongue. French syntax was not a fetter, he announced in a radio talk; years of writing French had taught him that. On the contrary, it was a "marvellous school of logic, and the submission of thought to rules—to superior, universal laws"; laws so logical, indeed, that they resisted "the assaults of barbarism." Gide only barely stopped short of implying that in good French one can only talk logically. Two years later, in a similarly adventurous spirit, George Orwell in an appendix on Newspeak to *Nineteen Eighty-four* (1949) suggested that a future totalitarian state might enforce a language in which no one could ever tell the truth. That is the other side of Gide's strange medal: nothing but truth, nothing but lies. Orwell wriggles so earnestly over his mind-stretching hypothesis that one

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Paintings from Books

Art and Literature in Britain, 1760-1900

By Richard D. Altick. Beginning about 1760, art ownership became a fashion among the prosperous middle class in England, and prominent among desirable paintings were those whose subjects were drawn from English poetry, drama, and fiction—the works of Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, and the rest of the steadily enlarging galaxy of "standard authors." Richard D. Altick's detailed narrative and analysis describe for the first time the process by which the literary and artistic tastes of the times were assimilated in this popular genre and trace its decline at the end of the Victorian era.

about $50.00

Making It Whole

A Victorian Circle and the Shape of Their World

By Diana Postlethwaite. The members of the Victorian circle delineated in this remarkable study in biography and intellectual history include John Stuart Mill, Auguste Comte, George Combe, Robert Chambers, Charles Bray, Harriet Martineau, George Henry Lewes, Herbert Spencer, and George Eliot. In some cases they were drawn together by friendship or love, but in all cases they were bound by a shared set of beliefs. Recurring throughout their work are the key ideologies of positivism, phrenology, the pre-Darwinian development hypothesis, necessitarianism, mesmeric "force"—components of a unifying vision of order in the universe.

$27.00

The Art and Science of Victorian History

By Rosemary Jann. Historiography in nineteenth-century England held a central place in the age's two ways of knowing, the rational and the imaginative, providing a form for the distinctively Victorian integration of the scientific, the historical, and the philosophical. This comparative study examines the work of Thomas Arnold, Thomas Carlyle, Thomas Babington Macaulay, James Anthony Froude, John Richard Green, and Edward Augustus Freeman. The Victorian impulse to gather from the past fresh material for the imagination—in service to various aesthetic and political ends—contributed to an inevitable confrontation between popular and professional history.

$27.00

OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY PRESS

1050 CARMACK ROAD, COLUMBUS, OHIO 43210
(614) 422-6930

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

senses, and hopes, that he cannot quite have believed in it himself; and I do not suppose, for that matter, that Gide would have gone to the stake for his generously grateful claims on behalf of the French language. In Newspeak, Orwell says, it might be "well-nigh impossible" to express an unorthodox opinion; and he meets the most obvious objection to all this—that all languages use negatives—by an argument that borders on the desperate. One could still call a dictator evil, admittedly—"Big Brother is ungood":

> But this statement, which to an orthodox ear merely conveyed a self-evident absurdity, could not have been sustained by reasoned argument, because the necessary words were not available.

But that does not persuade. However loaded a language may be, it surely remains possible to unload it, laborious as the process might be: by inventing and adapting new terms, by reviving old ones, by inserting or deleting negatives ("Freedom is *not* slavery"), and by using a host of qualifiers like paradox and irony. If there exist "systematically misleading expressions"—to quote the title of a famous old article by Gilbert Ryle—it is nonetheless possible, as Ryle equally showed, to expose them. *Possible* here means linguistically possible. The state might forbid such behavior; but it remains bluntly implausible to suggest, with Gide, that a language could make one talk nothing but logic, or, with Orwell, that it could make one talk nothing but lies. It is not even possible, I suggest, to *conceive* of a language like that. I should be happy to offer a cash prize to anyone who can find one or invent one.

Modernism was usually less extreme than that. It was not Eliot's case, or Pound's, to suggest that a language might be all truth or all lies. Nor did they claim, like post-structuralists such as Barthes, that in its very nature language cannot perform any instrumental or realistic function. The Modernist case, at once humanist and yet critical of classic humanism, lay somewhere in the middle. That is its interest; that is its abiding appeal; that, perhaps, is why in academe it is back, or why it never quite went away. Its interest and appeal lie in that precarious balance it once struck between realism and skepticism. Modernist language describes—but only just; men can know—but only laboriously, fragmentarily, and after painful assessments of the difficulties. "We have no direct (immediate) knowledge of anything," the young Eliot suggested in his Harvard thesis of 1914, when he was a philosophical pupil of Bertrand Russell: "The 'immediately given' is the bag of gold at the end of the rainbow. Knowledge is invariably a matter of degree: you cannot put your finger upon even the simplest datum and say 'this we know.'" These words conclude an academic thesis on F. H. Bradley published late in Eliot's life as *Knowledge and Experience* (1964), and the chosen topic guarantees a philosophical source in nineteenth-century German idealism and its recent critics like Bradley and Russell. As a conviction, it was to change rather little during Eliot's lifetime. He was still a self-critical idealist a quarter of a century later, writing about the problems of language in *East Coker:* a poem that restates in verse the solemn contention of his 1914 Harvard thesis that "the mental resolves into a curious and intricate mechanism, and the physical reveals itself as a mental construct." That precarious view was a constant in his thought over the years and the decades; and it helps to explain the prevailing tone of *The Waste Land* and of *Four Quartets* alike: a solipsism earnestly contested and only narrowly evaded, as of a claustrophobe fearful of entering a dark tunnel. Or so it may have seemed to Eliot, to whom radical skepticism was always fearful. To the reader, by now, it all looks elegant rather than alarming, like the high-wire act of a supreme circus acrobat. Latter-day Modernism is more likely to startle an agoraphobe than a claustrophobe. In Borges, Beckett, and Calvino, the BBC of postwar Modernism, it is amusing rather than taxing—a way of showing oneself off as metaphysically whimsical. When a real professional does it, vertigo can be fun. And when the danger stops, in acrobatics, so does the interest. In Modernism, as in circuses, the danger is the interest.

It is in that danger, perhaps, that the return of Modernism to critical favor may ultimately be explained. Its critical appeal was plainly never political or religious. Among the early advocates of Eliot, few shared his dogmatic interests, which from the late 1920s were Christian-conservative; still fewer shared Pound's enthusiasms for Mussolini or fiscal

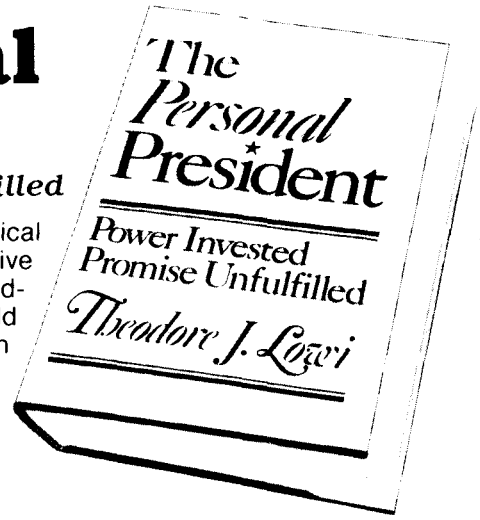
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Politics in America...

The Personal President

Power Invested, Promise Unfulfilled

By THEODORE J. LOWI. A renowned political observer here offers a bold and perceptive critique of the modern presidency. Concluding with suggestions for reform that would restore constitutional balance to American democracy, this candid analysis will be valuable reading to anyone concerned with the American political arena—its history and future. $19.95



IN THE SHADOW OF FDR

From Harry Truman to Ronald Reagan • *Updated with New Material*

By WILLIAM E. LEUCHTENBURG. "As he has often done before, William Leuchtenburg has added new dimensions to our understanding of 20th-century American history." —*Boston Globe* $8.95 paper

THE LAST TWO YEARS OF SALVADOR ALLENDE

By NATHANIEL DAVIS, U.S. Ambassador to Chile, 1971–1973. "The most important of the many accounts we have of Allende. It is not only an insider's account, but an honest one." —Walter F. LaFeber, Cornell University. $24.95

THE LIMITS OF VICTORY

The Ratification of the Panama Canal Treaties

By GEORGE D. MOFFETT III. "A penetrating study and an in-depth analysis of a historically significant success that became politically a Pyrrhic victory for the Carter presidency." —Zbigniew Brzezinski. $24.95

CITIZENS AND SOLDIERS

The Dilemmas of Military Service

By ELIOT A. COHEN. Why has the U.S.—unlike every other 20th-century world power—failed to settle on a durable system of military service? Cohen's answer to this question will interest anyone concerned with American military policy today. (Cornell Studies in Security Affairs.) $22.50

CORNELL UNIVERSITY PRESS

P.O. Box 250, Ithaca, New York 14851

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

reform. The great Eliotians were spectacularly secular and radical minds, on the whole: I. A. Richards, William Empson, F. R. Leavis, F. W. Bateson, and their long host of successors. The paradox was known and felt: hero-worship of Eliot persisted awkwardly down the years in an embarrassed consciousness of a vast dogmatic divide.

That leaves to us the task of discovering the causes of a revived Modernism outside politics and religion altogether. Recent Modernist critics like Frank Kermode or Christopher Ricks tend to be a bit unspecific about all this—apart from a continuing insistence, which no one contests, that Eliot wrote good poems. As friendly onlookers, we have to compensate for that vagueness with our own precision. And I suggest that such precision is to be found, though not easily found, in what I have called untranslatability.

Untranslatability, it must be said, leaves the Modernist ghost as insubstantial as ever. But then its insubstantiality is essential, as it always is to ghosts. The hero of Noel Coward's *Blithe Spirit* (1941) discovers he cannot touch his first wife, Elvira, when she inconsiderately returns from the dead, but he finds her nonetheless attractive for that. Non-substance lies at the heart of the Modernist mystery. And it is no disrespect to present disciples of the faith to say that they have taken argumentative shelter behind untranslatability, as if content to gesture toward Eliot's doctrines about truth and language and to leave them much as they found them. "We have our inheritance." As faithful disciples, in the end, they had no choice but that.

For a refusal to argue about essentials is in the end essential to the creed, and that species of incuriosity is a hallmark of the school. No wonder they stayed away from *Tom and Viv;* no wonder they should be so anxious in their public protests that the world should know they had stayed away. That refusal to discuss is inescapably at the heart of their doctrine. If great poets cannot be paraphrased, they can only be worshiped; if great poems cannot be translated, they can only be praised.

Nor do I see this as a canny evasion of critical responsibility. There is too much passionate sincerity at the heart of radical Modernism in our times, crucified as it is on the contradiction of acknowledging a religious conservative as its leader, to admit much place for guile; though it is undeniable that the movement has been kept alive, at least in part, by that academic passion for what the Germans call *eine Problematik*—a complex of problems endlessly inviting admiring debate and never ending in conclusions. A good deal of such critical theorizing reminds one of some vast dam-building project in southern Asia, where the unspoken fear lies in the thought that the work might some day run out and the World Bank turn its attentions elsewhere. Criticism has its over-manning problems nowadays, like other industries in the Western economy since the 1970s; and some of the agonies of Modernism are not only sincere but real.

To the outsider, however, happy as he may be to call Eliot a great poet and Joyce a great novelist without endorsing a dogma or sharing a cult, the phenomenon of a revived Modernism has its provoking aspects. Eliot's poetic achievement after *Ash Wednesday* (1930) looks to me more than ever like a matter of scattered aphorisms rather than a coherent wisdom, and his critical achievement likewise; and fragments do not become coherent merely by parading their fragmentariness and propounding a faith beyond themselves. Eliot's claim in *Ash Wednesday,* that radiant poem which appears to trace his own religious conversion, seems to be that devotion would somehow put it all together for us, if only we let it, and that the Church of England can be called in to finish a job that Hegel and F. H. Bradley between them could not quite manage. I do not believe that will wash. You cannot really get from critical idealism to Anglicanism, as an argument, and even Eliot fails to show that you can.

Dogmatically speaking, Modernism has come to have some of the convenient advantages of a way station or perch. As hair grays and arteries harden, so do radical critics turn conservative. They turn earlier, often, than they are ready to admit that they have turned—even to themselves. And there can be a tactical advantage in sitting on the Modernist perch as one wonders where next to lodge. In recent years Modernism has proved a godsend to the politically disillusioned. It is a place for the ironist; and irony can be the best defense there is against the charge of apostasy, being a habit of mind that forbids ques-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

USING BIOGRAPHY

William Empson

"I rate him as the chief literary critic of the century . . . This is almost certainly the finest study of Fielding ever written. The essay on Joyce is a great work. There is nothing to touch it."
–Frank Kermode $17.50

AMERICAN POETRY AND CULTURE, 1945–1980

Robert von Hallberg

"This is a bold and original book. It will enrage, it will provoke; at all events it should not be missed."–Donald Davie

Challenging the common perception of poets as standing apart from the mainstream of American culture, von Hallberg gives us a fresh and unpredictable assessment of the poetry that has come directly out of the American experience since 1945. $22.50

CONTEMPLATING MUSIC

Challenges to Musicology

Joseph Kerman

This is a book for all serious music lovers, and one that establishes the place of music study firmly in the mainstream of modern intellectual history. Here is the first full-scale account of ideas and ideologies in music over the past forty years. $16.00

LOOKING AT CITIES

Allan B. Jacobs

This book is about how to look at and understand urban environments. Using case studies of American and European cities, photographs, drawings, and maps, Jacobs shows us how to read cities by identifying and discussing the many visual clues and their various meanings in different environments.

111 halftones, 56 line illus. $22.50

Now in paperback

THE ODES OF JOHN KEATS

Helen Vendler

"Vendler's study of the Odes is as sympathetic, as fundamentally Keatsian, as it is persuasive. It contains the fullest and most searching expansion of these six poems . . . that has yet appeared."
Belknap –*Times Literary Supplement*
$7.95 paper

THE ART OF TELLING

Essays on Fiction

Frank Kermode

"*The Art of Telling* is a brilliant and well-articulated presentation of Kermode's argument about how to read a narrative . . . There can be no doubt that he is one of our best critics."
–J. Hillis Miller $6.95 paper

INVENTED WORLDS

The Psychology of the Arts

Ellen Winner

". . . draws together a vast array of research on creativity . . . The interested reader will find here an encyclopedia of issues in the field and an analysis of what is still unknown."
–*Psychology Today* $10.95 paper

HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS

79 Garden Street
Cambridge, MA 02138

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tioning. It may be no coincidence that the last bout of critical formalism, which was the American New Criticism in the years after 1945, occurred during another era of fading radical enthusiasm: a turning away from admiration of the USSR, in the era of Arthur Koestler and George Orwell, facetiously known at the time as the Retreat from Moscow. Formalism puts little dogmatic strain on its acolytes. Detachment is its substance; irony its style. Its instability is its charm. Nobody could feel under any obligation to canvass wet streets for a conviction as nebulous as this.

For how, after all, *can* we explain or test a doctrine that no one is ever allowed to paraphrase? If we may not say, "By this Eliot meant that . . . ," then the critic is forever bound to an uncomfortable or admiring silence, or to a display of language seldom better than self-regarding.

That, at least, is how the loyal and consistent disciple would behave, were his loyalty and consistency altogether unwavering. It is in his failure or refusal to do so—in the disparity between what he says and what he does—that the first chink in that armored doctrine may appear.

Dr. No

ADORNO. *By Martin Jay. Harvard University Press. $15.95. Paper, $5.95.*

Reviewed by WILFRED M. MCCLAY

As recently as two decades ago, the refugee social theorist Theodor Adorno was best known in the United States for having been the co-author of *The Authoritarian Personality*. This volume in the Studies in Prejudice series sought to provide a psychological and social profile of "fascistic" personalities and to supply researchers with a systematic means of detecting and measuring "authoritarian" character traits. Despite its serious defects, the book enjoyed a considerable succès d'estime among American intellectuals, influencing the methods and perspectives of a generation of liberal social scientists and historians. It was, however, quite unrepresentative of Adorno's work. Indeed, in certain respects it was antithetical to much else he had written; a collaborative project with all the positivistic trappings of American empirical social research could not have been further from Adorno's heart.

For Theodor Adorno was every inch the detached and speculative German philosopher, even though he had been shaped by the particular circumstances of the Weimar Republic. These two facts account for many of his enduring interests and attitudes. He shared with other intellectuals of the Weimar era the almost obligatory passion for Marx and Freud, expressed in a bewildering variety of heterodox styles and colors; a fascination with the fresh possibilities of modernism in the arts; and a visceral revulsion against the social and cultural conditions of modern life, giving rise to the radical temper animating both the national-socialist Right and the international-socialist Left. Paradoxically, Adorno also acquired a lofty mandarin manner, derived from the esoteric concerns and pseudo-aristocratic style that had long characterized the German professoriat.

When the rise of Hitler forced Adorno and his colleagues at the Institut für Sozialforschung to seek refuge in the United States, they found themselves plunged into an alien intellectual milieu, one with little sympathy for their Weimarian preoccupations and manners. As a result, Adorno preferred to keep his distance; he did not believe in "adjustment," and a self-imposed obscurity would at least allow him to preserve the purity of his radical principles. He and the others continued to publish their most important works in German—despite the fact that there was then no German audience for them. American exile was like being shipwrecked on a desert island; Adorno regarded each of his German essays as "a message in a bottle" set adrift in the unfriendly sea of the present with the slender hope that it might someday be recovered by a comprehending reader.

Four decades later, the romantic melancholy of this metaphor seems misplaced, for Adorno's bottles have been washing ashore in profusion all over the Western world. Suddenly Adorno is a terribly fashionable author, for his work links up nicely with the current

WILFRED M. MCCLAY is an Arthur O. Lovejoy Fellow in the department of history at Johns Hopkins University.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

vogue for neo-Marxian cultural criticism and deconstructionism—two of the principal ways in which the disappointed radicalism of the 1960s has sublimated itself into academically respectable form. It is precisely this current wave of popularity that has created the market for Martin Jay's *Adorno*. Originally published in England as part of Fontana's Modern Masters series, the book is meant to provide a frankly popular introduction to a notoriously difficult author.

Jay has impressive credentials for the job. His earlier book, *The Dialectical Imagination*, an admirable (if a bit too admiring) intellectual and institutional history of the Frankfurt School, firmly established his authority and demonstrated an uncommon ability to translate the most recondite formulations of Critical Theory into intelligible—or nearly intelligible—English prose. But the present work has caused him pangs of bad conscience. "Adorno," he worries, "would have been appalled at a book of this kind devoted to him." Of this we can be certain. Adorno prided himself on the inaccessibility of his thought to vulgar minds and claimed that the truths he meant to convey were inseparable from the "resistance" his prose presented to the reader. Popularization was not only distasteful, but dangerous; "the advocates of communicability," he warned, are "traitors to what they communicate."

Clearly Jay did not undertake this book with treason in mind; he came to praise Adorno, not to bury him. But a popular work on a difficult thinker can be surprisingly revealing, if carefully done; it must find its way directly to the heart of that thinker's vision and cannot dally for long among the highly nuanced details. The clear view thus afforded may present the subject in a distinctly unflattering light. This is particularly true of certain modern thinkers whose systems achieve their effects by enveloping the reader in specialized vocabularies and peculiar agenda. Such systems resemble astronomical black holes, for the assumptions built into their prescribed language exert such a powerful centripetal force that no rays of enlightenment can escape the system's gravitational field. In Adorno's case, so much effort is needed to decode his cryptic and oracular texts that one can easily become oblivious to the larger context within which his work's implications ought to be judged. Reading Adorno, one becomes like Saul Steinberg's Manhattanite, who finds himself forgetting that there is a world west of the Hudson. Jay's book, then, may have a value that its author never quite intended.

Critical Theory, the trademark of the Frankfurt School, is something of a misnomer, because it was rather more concerned with the criticism of existing concepts than the formulation of any new ones. Negative Dialectics, Adorno's own term for his method, perhaps better conveys a sense of the programmatic counter-punching that marked his work, a project conducted in the spirit of the young Marx's call for a "ruthless criticism of everything existing." Indeed, it was the Marxian tradition of social critique, with its emphasis on "unmasking" or "demystifying" the hidden mechanisms by which ruling-class domination is perpetuated, that Adorno drew on. He had no use for the tradition of "scientific" Marxism, and even put aside the fundamental notions of base and superstructure. What remained consistently Marxian was the insistent tone of outrage and bitterness, the obsession with concealed forces of domination and exploitation lurking within the structure of everyday life. Because the deceptions of late-capitalist ideology had invaded even the most intimate recesses of our experience, in Adorno's view, an independent thinker could take nothing at face value. The world, Adorno claimed, is "a delusional system"—an organized and integrated lie.

Jay's book has the great virtue of making Adorno's vision of the world so vivid that one cannot miss the element of phantasmagoria in it. Nor can one miss the emptiness at the core, for Critical Theory knows only how to say no—and no number of negations can ever add up to an affirmation. (The very word *affirmative* was a slur in Adorno's vocabulary, synonymous with *bourgeois*.) Even his precious few attempts at positive assertion were only negations in disguise. For example, he deplored the distortions entailed in "fixed" concepts, one of the many respects in which he anticipated the contemporary deconstructionists; but in calling for "fluid" concepts to serve in their stead, he posited a notion that is unintelligible, except insofar as it stands in logical opposition to something he dislikes. Although Jay makes much of Adorno's preoccupation with Utopia, all we ever find out about

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Adorno's Utopia is what it is *not:* it is non-dominating, non-antagonistic, non-hierarchical, un-totalized, non-demotic. But an encyclopedia of distastes is not the same thing as an idea.

A purely negative method is bound to produce purely piecemeal results, and, as Jay admits, there are respects in which Adorno's thought seems incoherent or contradictory. It is Jay's task to discover meaning in this seeming incoherence; but whenever he feels called upon to do so, his prose suddenly modulates into another key—a misty pseudo-scientese that reads like a Peter De Vries parody, heightening one's suspicion that thought is here being concealed, not revealed:

> The frequently remarked paratactic quality of his style, with its refusal to subordinate arguments and observations in a hierarchically entailed manner, grew out of his unwillingness to privilege one element . . . over another. The result was not a relativistic chaos of unrelated factors, but a dialectical model of negations that simultaneously constructed and deconstructed patterns of a fluid reality. . . . [We] must conceptualize [Adorno] in a manner which will be as true to the unresolved tensions in his thought as possible, rather than seek to find some putative coherence underlying them.

Some of these "unresolved tensions," however, are too disturbing to be passed over so lightly. For example, one of Adorno's obsessions was the domination of thought by abstraction, which he linked to the triumph of "exchange value" and "commodification" brought about by market capitalism. But anyone who has read five sentences of Adorno knows that he is himself the most abstract of thinkers. He traced the "original sin" of abstraction back to the unhealthy division of mental labor from physical labor. But the Frankfurt School's brand of rarified discourse is possible only for specialized intellectuals unencumbered by material or practical consequences. Indeed, one might say that Critical Theory was an attempt to push the separation of mental and physical endeavor to its utmost. Adorno may have been abstractly convinced of the evils of abstraction, but he never let that interfere with his abstract manner of writing or thinking.

The autonomy Adorno sought was conceivable only in that most bourgeois of institutions, the liberal university. But Adorno, like his colleague Herbert Marcuse, rejected the liberal premises upholding the ideal of academic freedom. That he had foolishly undercut his own position became clear in 1969, when he was publicly humiliated by radical German students who objected to his political quietism. Barbarous as the students were, it was hard to feel much sympathy for Adorno, since the students were merely following the practical implications of their teacher's ideas. Had not Marx insisted on the unity of theory and practice? Adorno's response to this criticism showed how pathetically empty his notion of praxis was: "Open thinking . . . takes a position as a figuration of praxis which is more closely related to a praxis truly involved in change than is a position of mere obedience for the sake of praxis." Better to dream a perfect dream than compromise with a treacherous reality.

The more Adorno's contradictions pile up, the more one suspects that their ultimate source lies in the personality of the man who created them. On this, Jay has less to say than he should, for the facts are revealing. As the only child of a wealthy, highly assimilated German-Jewish wine merchant and his Italian-Catholic wife, Adorno experienced an extraordinarily pampered high-bourgeois childhood in Wilhelminian Frankfurt. Although his father was a somewhat chilly and remote figure, his mother, who had given up a highly successful singing career in order to marry, poured her energies and affection into the rearing of her beloved "Teddie." She and her spinster sister, also a talented musician, gave constant attention and encouragement to the musically and intellectually precocious boy, who consequently developed a fondness for his mother's refined world of musical parlors and genteel drawing rooms, and an equally ingrained distaste for his father's commercial world, from which he was well insulated. The solicitous warmth of his childhood home would be the standard of happiness against which his future experiences would all be judged—and all fall short.

Some of Adorno's acquaintances have noted his many childlike qualities that persisted into adulthood; he had an unworldly, unguarded nature that required that he constantly be protected and guided through the vicissitudes of adult life. This task was performed partly by his wife, Gretel, and even

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

more by his friend and collaborator Max Horkheimer, the institutional mastermind of the Frankfurt School. Adorno may have had the arrogance of an only child accustomed to undivided attention, but he was also afflicted with a considerable degree of childlike dependency and vulnerability.

Jay is convinced that Adorno's childhood was blissful, but there is also powerful evidence, in Adorno's own words, that those early years had a darker cast to them. "In Fascism," he wrote in *Minima Moralia*, "the nightmare of childhood has come true." To him, the Nazis were merely an adult version of the ignorant and contemptuous schoolboys of his youth, a "male confederacy" of bullies and "bad comrades" who taunted him as an oddball. These painful encounters, such a jolting contrast to the tender world his mother had provided, burned into his mind "the motifs of permanent catastrophe." So intense were his feelings of estrangement and persecution that he believed the anguish of his childhood was continuous with the political horrors that had caused his exile; looking back on his life, he said it seemed "as if the total State had been invented expressly against me." The ancient scars of childhood had become stigmata invested with world-historical significance. We can only guess how much his portrait of the self-hating authoritarian personality, and of the sadomasochistic father-son relationship that produced it, may also have owed to his experiences.

One of the authoritarian personality's characteristic traits was its habit of unconsciously projecting its own negative features onto other persons and agencies. Often, we seem to find Adorno doing just that. In *The Authoritarian Personality* he described a syndrome afflicting those who "did not succeed in adjusting themselves to the world, in accepting 'the reality principle.' " Withdrawing into isolation, these people "build up a spurious inner world," which fills the vacuum left by their "violent rejection of the external world." Their "soul" becomes "their dearest possession." They are "paranoid" and create a "pseudoreality against which their aggressiveness can be directed without any *overt* violation of the 'reality principle.' " They think in abstract stereotypes, which provide them with "social corroboration of their projective formulae."

History from Kent

Land and Revolution in Modern Greece, 1800-1871

The Transition in the Tenure and Exploitation of Land from Ottoman Rule to Independence

by William W. McGrew. Since the fortunes of newly independent Greece were based on the products of the land, agrarian questions colored all aspects of the economic, social, and political concerns of 19th-century Greece and are fundamental to an understanding of the emergence of the modern nation. This is a major contribution to agricultural as well as Greek history. *$35.00*

Gentle Knight

The Life and Times of Major General Edwin Forrest Harding

by Leslie Anders. World War II general, first Chief of Military History for the U.S. Army, General Harding was a rare combination of soldier and scholar, career Army with strong and wide civilian ties. As a result, his story reveals much about the intellectual and social history of the Army, particularly in the period between the two world wars. *$27.50*

Kent State University Press
Kent, Ohio 44242

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This, remember, is the same man who bitterly criticized positivism for its willingness to surrender to the mere "factuality" of the world as given and who found grounds for hope only in the furious independence of his own mind, besieged as it was by the sinister forces of reification. Adorno could transform his own feelings of estrangement into the signs of a superior consciousness through the magic of abstraction. But, at the same time, he could project the more threatening aspects of that estrangement, aspects he may well have sensed in himself, onto the people he most loathed and feared. In the end, the forbidding labyrinth of his work resembles an elaborate game of psychological hide-and-seek, played out within the dark solitude of a deeply divided soul.

Saved by Literature

EDMUND GOSSE: A LITERARY LANDSCAPE, 1849–1928. *By Ann Thwaite. University of Chicago Press. $25.*

Reviewed by MARY LAGO

In 1969 John Gross suggested, in *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters*, that Edmund Gosse "would make a good subject for a new biography." Now Ann Thwaite has written that biography: 511 pages that portray Edmund Gosse framed by the "Literary Landscape" of the subtitle. Are these many pages too many on a figure generally categorized as outdated, outshone, and principally remembered for a single acknowledged masterpiece, *Father and Son*? Not if one values the wide-angle view of that landscape, which during Gosse's lifetime included a fine variety of literary scenery: high Victorian, late Victorian, Edwardian, Georgian, and early modern. It is something to have been a part of so much cultural history, and Mrs. Thwaite sets out to re-create it for us, with Gosse in the foreground. She intended to investigate "the justice of twentieth-century reactions against Gosse," and the more she looked into his case, the more she felt that he had "performed functions that still need to be performed by those who care about literature." She quotes, not approvingly, T. S. Eliot's remark that Gosse's place in the literary and social life of London "is one that no one can ever fill again, because it has been abolished. . . . He was, indeed, an amenity, but not quite any sort of amenity for which I can see any great need in our time."

Mrs. Thwaite believes that we owe it to history and to ourselves to know why the office existed and whether, if it has been abolished, we have lost something worthwhile. She wants to show us the range of Gosse's undeniable strengths and virtues: "I wanted to look at him directly, this man who appeared over and over again playing bit parts in the biographies of other people, part of the furniture of Victorian and Edwardian England." Looking directly at Gosse means also looking at the weaknesses that call forth the standard ho-hum reaction to him as dilettante, snob, and social climber. What Mrs. Thwaite wants for him is simple justice. She performs her task in steady, well-regulated prose, and with a pleasing air of really enjoying her association with Gosse, his family, and his friends. There is a good deal of chronological to-ing and fro-ing, which slows the pace at times. One remembers, however, that this is a literary landscape. It is being built up like a painting, stroke by stroke, and the painter must step back now and then to make certain that the perspectives are right.

Mrs. Thwaite makes good use of what was obviously a huge mass of both old and new material. A number of reviewers of Evan Charteris's biography, *The Life and Letters of Sir Edmund Gosse*, published in 1931, complained that the book was less life than letters, which were served up in undigestible chunks. Mrs. Thwaite makes excellent use of them, integrating them gracefully with her narrative. Earlier readers also regretted that Charteris had shown too little of Gosse at home. Mr. Thwaite supplies this side of his life most engagingly, with Nellie Gosse appearing as a woman with a mind of her own and a great deal of both domestic and public charm, the best sort of wife for Edmund Gosse. Plainly, it was often Nellie who knew how to keep the delicate balance between Edmund's private and public lives.

MARY LAGO is a professor of English at the University of Missouri-Columbia. She is co-editor, with P. N. Furbank, of the authorized edition of E. M. Forster's letters.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

There were indeed two sides to Gosse, and, as usual, Max Beerbohm has fixed upon their salient characteristics. His well-known caricature in the Old and the Young Self series pictures the grown-up Gosse in evening dress, startled in mid-soiree by his younger self, the precocious infant evangelist who intrudes, arms uplifted, among the literary lights and national nabobs to demand, "Are you saved?" In fact, various forms of that question returned to bedevil Gosse, even in times of greatest fame and influence, sometimes making him lash out at friends (outbursts for which he atoned with remorse) and sometimes pitching him into a black hole of despair about whether he had in fact accomplished something, or anything, or nothing.

That he accomplished as much as he did, in view of his severely restricted early life and his lack of formal education, is extraordinary enough. The story of his childhood and his relations with his father, the eminent naturalist Philip Henry Gosse, is told in that single masterpiece, *Father and Son: A Study of Two Temperaments*. Reading it, one cringes in sympathy for the son, and the effect on anyone with even a diluted experience of that kind of evangelical childhood can be harrowing. The long emotional and theological contest between father and son is all the more personal and fateful because it incorporates so much of the tension between two eras: the nineteenth century, whose "educational and religious conditions," as Gosse wrote in his unsigned preface, "which, having passed away, will never return," and twentieth-century "modernity." Gosse intended his memoir as "the diagnosis of a dying Puritanism," a document that incorporates both comedy and tragedy, "and those who are affected by the pathos of it will not need to have it explained to them that the comedy was superficial and the tragedy essential." Much of the painfulness of the situation was in the long dying of the old era, and it is noteworthy that even in 1907 Gosse felt obliged, even though the authorship was an open secret, to publish his book anonymously.

Mrs. Thwaite has wisely decided not to try to "rewrite *Father and Son*." Instead, she supplements it in her early chapters with new material intended to be read alongside that book. Another book that may with profit be read alongside *Father and Son* is Edmund's

"Wise and witty . . . elegant." *—Washington Post Book World*

The History Men

John Kenyon

"A well-written, straightforward account of how English history has been written in England during the last three or four hundred years."
—A. J. P. Taylor, *London Review of Books*

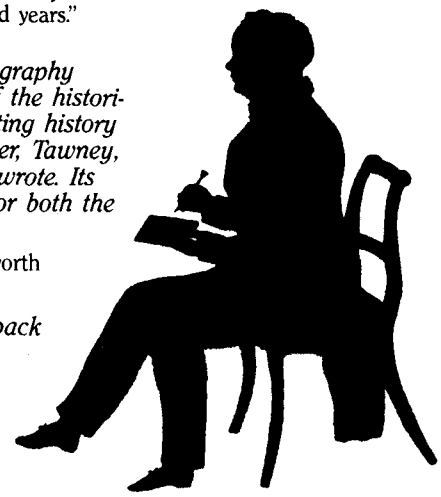
Written by a skilled practitioner of intellectual biography with a talent for drawing character, this survey of the historical profession in England looks at the people writing history —Macaulay, Carlyle, Buckle, Acton, Stubbs, Namier, Tawney, Elton, and others—as well as at the history they wrote. Its lively approach will make it compelling reading for both the general reader and the specialist.

"An entertaining book in the grand tradition . . . well worth reading."—*The Virginia Quarterly Review*

$14.95 paperback

Available at your bookstore or call toll free 800-638-3030 (Maryland residents call collect 301-824-7300).

University of Pittsburgh Press
Pittsburgh, PA 15260



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

kindly biography of his father, *The Life of Philip Henry Gosse, F.R.S.*, published in 1890. It is dutiful and respectful, guardedly affectionate, and thoroughly Victorian. It lacks the rueful comedy, the bright and surprising turns of phrase that make *Father and Son* so memorable and so modern. But it does bring to the fore a fundamental fact about the father and the son: the pattern of each life is the exact reverse of the other. Edmund's sheltered and priggish young self became the older self, rejoicing in the accomplishments of the secular world. Philip Henry's young self was early in the world, and, if one fills in the details, his career comes to seem quite extraordinary. As an obscure young man in the early nineteenth century, he had witnessed what must have been particularly seamy parts of the globe: as a trader's clerk in Newfoundland, as a pioneer farmer in the Canadian woods, as a schoolteacher in backwoods antebellum Alabama, and as a naturalist in Jamaica. Science was the field that held him and in which his became a name of lasting distinction. In his wanderings he must have witnessed scenes of raw frontier life easily calculated to turn the seriously inclined young man into that straitlaced older self, the unyieldingly single-minded Plymouth Brother. Yet there is little direct evidence of so close a connection between Philip Henry's early experiences and his subsequent determination to be the model of what he intended his son's older self should be. Mrs. Thwaite's volume has had reproduced again the famous 1857 photograph taken when Philip Henry was forty-seven and Edmund eight. They are side by side, in profile, both gazing straight ahead. Philip Henry is alert, wary but composed. Edmund, lovingly encircled by his father's arm, frowns and seems to be trying earnestly to visualize whatever it is that his father sees so clearly: that was surely the portent of the very specific judgment day when he and his would be "saved," literally translated from the mundane to the purest spiritual.

One must wonder about Edmund's feelings as he wrote the biography of his father. Surely it harrowed up old emotions that he would rather have left undisturbed. Mrs. Thwaite does not tell us much about this, and perhaps cannot, but she reminds us that it was George Moore's comment that he "missed the child, I missed your father's life and your life as you lived it together" that led eventually to *Father and Son*. Mrs. Thwaite now supplements that account with domestic details that make a difference to the story. The restrictions and perplexities of Edmund's childhood were not all there was to it. He did not spend all his early life in a dark house in North London. He had seaside summers during which the father, closely followed and imitated by the son, gathered and classified specimens. Their later home at St. Marychurch, Devon, "became more and more attractive: outside the garden clematis climbed more luxuriantly up the veranda; the gardens and greenhouses and aquaria were full of rich delights. Inside there were brilliant cases of tropical insects and in winter the leaping flames of good fires." If the Gosses were not affluent, they were not poor either, but lived in decent comfort and frequently more. Father and son, if they could never be genuine friends, were often good companions. They "would hang together over the rock pools, eager for new discoveries." Philip Henry could value a joke, and even essayed one himself now and then, if a bit heavy-handedly. Mrs. Thwaite informs us that he called Edmund "Willy." Willy! It alters one's perception of the awesome and demanding father. The fact is that the Gosses' home was full of love, love between Philip and Edmund's American mother Emily Bowes Gosse, who died dreadfully of a maltreated cancer; between Philip and Edmund's stepmother Eliza Brightwen Gosse; between both women and the child; and certainly between Philip and Edmund. The trouble with this last was that Philip's was a love that would not let Edmund go.

Once he declared his independence, Edmund was off and running, propelled by the passion for literature that became his new religion. Mrs. Thwaite, a careful and engaging chronicler, follows him up to London in 1867 and on through a career that was, until he became Librarian of the House of Lords in 1904, a combination of dreary hackwork, first at the British Museum and then at the Board of Trade, and of rapid progress to literary prominence and influence among both writers and publishers. He yearned to be recognized as a poet, but his own early poems may be disregarded as lightweight period pieces. What made him so attractive to the literary eminences whom he met was his freshness

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and eagerness, his insatiable appetite for literature of all sorts, his utter belief in literature as a means of cultural salvation. Stevenson and Swinburne, Browning, James, Hardy, and the rest were genuine friends, not mere trophies of a scramble up the social ladder. It is true that he enjoyed hobnobbing with the great at country house parties. It is also true that he used constructively, and sometimes to politically important effect, the confidences that he received there. He was not uncritical of his important friends. "Gosse kept a beady eye on the peers themselves," Mrs. Thwaite says, "as well as the MPs. Those who accused him of loving a lord, and there were many, might not have realised that Lords, even more than Commoners, were in the line for pitiless criticism. Their weaknesses and foibles amused and roused him far more than their splendours impressed him."

Charteris described Gosse's walk as "curiously suggestive at once of eagerness and of caution." Virginia Woolf, who sneered at Gosse more than once, saw those characteristics prevailing and "limiting his intelligence." Yet there he was, bright and bouncy, cultivating literary interests and friendships that were then by no means "safe": making friends with Swinburne; publicizing Ibsen a decade before Archer, Shaw, and England had heard of him; talking up American literature; promoting Gide before he was famous in France; advocating English literature as worthy of a place of its own in British university studies. There were times, however, when the underlying caution, born of awareness of his restricted background, should have come uppermost. The instance that comes to mind, of course, is the Churton Collins affair. Collins—whom Phyllis Grosskurth has called "the scourge of the late Victorians"—in a *Quarterly Review* article of October 1885 savaged Gosse's *From Shakespeare to Pope: An Inquiry into the Causes and Phenomena of the Rise of Classical Poetry in England.* This volume contained Gosse's 1884 American lectures that became the 1885 Clark Lectures at Cambridge. Collins ruthlessly catalogued Gosse's many errors of fact and chronology, and he castigated Cambridge for allowing such slovenly scholarship within the sacred precincts. As journalist, Collins was pedantic. As critic, he was a demolition expert. As friend, he was touchy and more than a little

INCHARDI

Novels by J. Inchardi
$15 each

Lines On The Death Of A Fisherman

Three Jews In A Tub

Dreamship

Yurros

A Paper Toy

Intercurse

Jehovah Mafioso

Saturn Maru

Drek Shlak

Om Budsman

Order from **Sirius Books**
P.O. Box 177
Freeport, Maine 04032

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

paranoid. An Oxford man himself (but with a third-class degree), he was disappointed in his own career, which was painfully lackluster beside that of Gosse. The sad irony of the situation was that he and Gosse ought to have been allies. Collins, too, believed in the illuminating powers of literature; he, too, wanted to see English literature in the universities as a discipline in its own right. The difficulty for Gosse was that Collins was correct about the errors in the lectures. Gosse survived this "scandal of the year," because Collins had overstated his case and overdone the vitriol, and because Gosse's influential friends rallied round to defend and comfort him; but 1885 was one of the darkest years of his life.

Still, he went on making mistakes of the kind easily corrected in any good library. Why did the trauma of 1885 not make him even more cautious? Is it not possible that Gosse suffered from some kind of emotional block about documentation? That would be understandable in view of the disciplines of his childhood and his youth, when every thought and every action of daily life had to be documented for and by him out of the Bible, word by word and verse by verse.

In any event, much of what Gosse hoped for has indeed come to pass. Literary horizons have been expanded to an extent he did not even imagine. His daring discoveries have become establishment figures, even a little dated. American literature is received with some interest in England, and English literature is studied in English universities. What more could we want?

We could, if we are not careful, find ourselves wanting more of Edmund Gosse's emphasis upon the personal touch—the friendly contact, the message or report delivered over coffee, not by telex or photocopy. How many authors, even quite well-established authors, know their publishers—their publishers, not their editors—as individuals? One could take tea with Mr. John Murray or Mr. Charles Scribner; one cannot take tea with a conglomerate. Something valuable, which Gosse could take for granted, is being lost: the knowledge that behind the publisher's name on the spine of the book there is a living, breathing human being.

The reader loses also. The impersonality of publishing is particularly acute in the United States because the literary community is so widely scattered. Attempts to inject a personal touch through the daily parade of television talk-show book-promotion spots are only author processing, and everyone knows it. The empathy between reader and author, created by the author's literary voice, is dissipated, frittered away in the demands of time schedules and often ill-informed interviewers. The reader begins to prefer being left alone with the book. The book-talk programs of the BBC come closer to a truly personal touch—a saving remnant, perhaps, of the Gosse tradition.

T. S. Eliot, although he regarded Gosse's role as a disposable "amenity," used exactly the right word. Among the OED definitions—older ones, it must be admitted—are "joyousness, exhilaration," and "pleasures, delights." No one appointed Gosse as introducer, arranger, and all-purpose literary promoter. He simply did it, because he found literature joyous and exhilarating, a pleasure and a delight. Mrs. Thwaite's biography may be read, with pleasure, as a plea to us to cherish those still indispensable amenities.

In Pursuit of the Past

McKim, Mead & White, Architects. *By Leland M. Roth. Harper & Row. $40.*

McKim, Mead & White. *By Richard Guy Wilson. Rizzoli. $35.*

Reviewed by Christian F. Otto

Two books by two different authors appearing simultaneously on the architecture of McKim, Mead & White seems like binary architectural history. The common subject matter is compounded by a comparable theme in both texts—that the primary achievement of McKim, Mead & White is their classical architecture designed for the city. Certainly during these decades, interest in the cities overwhelmed an earlier ideal of rural America. Leland Roth observes that, from the 1880s into the 1920s, American cities were growing faster than they ever had before or would

CHRISTIAN F. OTTO is professor of architecture at Cornell University. From 1974 to 1981 he served as the editor of the *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*. He is the author of *Space into Light: The Churches of Balthasar Neumann.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

again. Richard Wilson argues that architects responded by constructing a classical vision. Work by McKim, Mead & White was produced in other styles and for non-urban sites, but Roth and Wilson agree that the historical significance of the partnership lies in its classical urban architecture.

Initially, this classical predilection of the architects appears to have been an escapist fantasy. Prodigious urban growth at the time was choked in human misery: chaotic expansion, destructive slums, corruption, manufacturing tracts deadened with dirt and despair. In the face of horrors like these, are we to conclude that architects then—not only McKim, Mead & White, but many others disposed toward classicism—were afflicted with social myopia and unable to see their surroundings? Did the excitement of unimagined economic expansion encourage utopian cultural reverie?

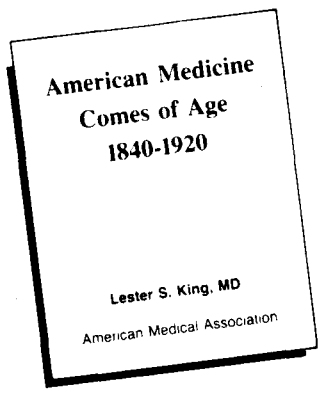
The matter was in fact of a very different complexion. For decades, reformers had been grappling with a range of urban problems, from inadequate housing and working conditions to the need for parks and green areas. Drawing on these efforts, architects saw the problems of the city in equal measure to its potential. Their classical vision carried the fervent conviction that real urban reform was possible. They believed that classical urban beauty could be an effective instrument of social change, that a built domain of noble character would so form human society. Long after the ideal of the classical city had spent its force, this notion remained. For decades following World War II, the assumption that a well-built environment would produce social well-being motivated the national effort at urban renewal.

The new buildings intended to realize this classical vision were themselves classical through and through—classical in their compositions of columns, pediments, and domes, enriched with the classical detail of anthemion, palmette, and dentil. The partnership of McKim, Mead & White, formed just over a century ago in 1879 and responsible for almost nine hundred commissions during the next three decades, was the mainspring that transformed the civic and residential architecture of America into a classical idiom. The partners developed their designs with a spirit from classical pasts that they observed in Colonial, Georgian, and Italian Renaissance buildings, and from publications on ancient

Announcing an Important Publication on the History of U.S. Medicine...

American Medicine Comes of Age 1840-1920

by Lester S. King, M.D.



Dr. King's other books include *The Growth of Medical Thought, The Road to Medical Enlightenment, The Philosophy of Medicine,* and *Medical Thinking: A Historical Preface.*

This significant compilation of essays traces the history of medicine in the United States from its British heritage to the famous Flexner Report. Written by Lester S. King, M.D., these fascinating articles were originally published to mark the centennial of the *Journal of the American Medical Association.*

American Medicine Comes of Age is 115 pages, softcover, and priced at $9.95 (please add $3.00 handling and delivery charge). To order, make check payable to AMA, indicate title and order number OP-184, and provide complete mailing address.

Mail to: Book & Pamphlet Fulfillment, OP-184, American Medical Association, P.O. Box 10946, Chicago, IL 60610.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Greek and Roman architecture. They could spot a muddled architrave at fifty paces and sanctioned only correct detail in their buildings.

Classicism is the most immediate and telling aspect of their architecture, but McKim, Mead & White achieved considerably more. In the design of a commission, they worked out the plan until it had become direct, lucid, elegant. In civic structures, the public was guided with ease and dignified ceremony through ordered arrangements of interior space. Before being wantonly razed twenty years ago, Pennsylvania Railroad Station demonstrated a consummate McKim, Mead & White plan to thousands of daily commuters. In private residences, the firm devised flowing internal spaces that opened subtly to the outside world.

A McKim, Mead & White plan would be developed in elevation by means of carefully considered compositions, enhanced inside and out by the quiet splendor of murals, sculpture, and stained glass. Well-known artists, such as Augustus Saint-Gaudens and Daniel Chester French, John Singer Sargent and John La Farge, were often responsible for this work.

Just as architecture and the other arts were brought into concert by McKim, Mead & White, so were the buildings purposefully related to their larger sites. New projects were designed both to respect the settings into which they were placed and to modify the context intelligently for the better; for example, the stately restraint of the Boston Public Library lent classical authority to an architectural jumble around Copley Square.

Because they built so much, the architecture of McKim, Mead & White could be seen and enjoyed throughout the United States. This was the first of the giant architectural firms that have come to dominate American building in our time. It was a distinguished precedent with dubious consequences. In contrast to much architectural production by juggernaut firms that were to follow them, McKim, Mead & White demonstrated from the outset that a prodigious number of commissions could be joined effectively with integrity and quality.

Despite these achievements, the firm fell into disfavor as attacks against any kind of eclecticism—the use of architectural forms from the past—became virulent from the 1930s on. A contemporary architecture could not be imitative, rang the parole, and in schools of architecture the curtain was brought down on all involvement with the classical orders. Currently a reassessment of classicism is in the making, prompted by more inclusive attitudes toward buildings from the past and the growth of a preservationist credo. The simultaneous appearance of two new books on McKim, Mead & White doubly confirms the resurrection of the firm's reputation.

Although a common theme informs both, the Roth and Wilson volumes are a study in contrasts. The format of the Roth volume is contained and consistent, as opposed to the splashier, less-even production of Wilson's. Roth proceeds step-by-step in his discussion, considering the history of virtually every more significant commission undertaken by the firm until about 1910; Wilson sprints through one summary chapter and rapidly collects brief entries on thirty projects. While Roth develops his few summary assessments at length, Wilson darts from idea to idea without building a more thorough case for any. An indicative instance of these oppositions is the discussion by each author of McKim's involvement in the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. Roth chronicles the history of the fair but does not consider its significance; Wilson uses McKim's association with the event to aggrandize the firm's contribution to urban aesthetics, the City Beautiful movement. Each in inverse proportion provides too much and not enough.

That these books should appear in tandem at just this moment, even though both authors began work on the subject in the late 1960s, is more than fortuitous. These days it is largely the profession that consumes publications on architecture, providing a ready market for pertinent architectural histories. Generally, the current enthusiasm among architects for things classical appears to derive from virtues perceived to be inherent in classical architecture—the commodity of a venerable tradition, the firmness of noble construction, the delight of civic design. More specifically, three distinct groups of architects are interested in classicism from three different points of view. The first group contains that line of practitioners, continuous since the late nineteenth century, committed to making a classical culture, and whose position has been champi-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

oned by Henry Hope Reed, president of Classical America, a society founded in 1968. The two other groups consist of architects trained under the tenets of modernism, but who now are striving for greater architectural richness than they feel is possible within modernism as taught and practiced since the 1940s.

The traditional practitioners are little heard from these days, but the two other groups are strident and rail against one another. This discourse between the moderns opposes those primarily interested in the architectural forms of classicism and those who conceive of classicism as a philosophy of architecture. The cause of the one is advanced by Charles Jencks, a teacher and publicist who spends half his time in London, half in Los Angeles. He favors a free and flexible interpretation of classical elements, permitting lower costs and promoting minimal standards in design, so that an architectural "culture" will be easily available to all. Jencks includes in his camp such architects as Ricardo Bofill, Michael Graves, and Charles Moore. Demetri Prophyrios, a London-based teacher and architect, is the chief advocate for the other position. He maintains that classicism is metaphysics because it addresses the essential and necessary qualities of architecture—reason, economy, durability, pleasure—and grapples with the fundamental problem of all architecture, the achievement of purpose through a reconciliation of construction with form. Prophyrios points to architects such as Giorgio Grassi, Leon Krier, and Aldo Rossi as adherents to this persuasion.

The enthusiastic debate on classicism has produced a profusion of panels, polemics, and publications, including presumably the simultaneous appearance of these two different books on McKim, Mead & White. Energetic discourse is commonly a sign of life, and recent histories on nineteenth- and twentieth-century classicism do provide information about architects, clients, buildings, and events; to this extent they are useful additions. Roth and Wilson contribute by collecting and ordering a body of material, and they offer a decent compendium of visual information and a sufficiency of plans.

In all the talk on classicism, however, little is heard about the meaning of this architecture, an issue honored more in the breach than the observance. A superb introduction to

The Yale Review

Kai Erikson, editor

For seventy-three years *The Yale Review* has been publishing the best in poetry, fiction, book reviews, and essays of general intellectual interest. And the tradition remains very much alive.

The latest two issues, for example, were devoted to "Reflections on America," with contributions by Daniel Aaron, Norman Birnbaum, Malcolm Cowley, Annie Dillard, Robert Fitzgerald, Stanley Kauffmann, Howard Lamar, Lawrence Levine, R. W. B. Lewis, N. Scott Momaday, Elting Morison, and others, with reviews of current poetry by John Hollander and of current fiction by Maureen Howard.

The Spring issue of *The Yale Review* will feature an essay on Jesus in human culture by Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, and a special section on reference works with articles by Marie Borroff on books of language usage, Edward Mendelson on Baedekers, Edward Rothstein on *The New Grove Dictionary of Music*, and others.

Please send the _____ Fall 1984
_____ Winter 1985
_____ Spring 1985 issue of *The Yale Review* at $5.00 per issue.

_____ I would like a year's subscription to *The Yale Review* at $14.00 ($22 for institutions).

My check for _____ is enclosed. (CT residents add 7½% sales tax.)

Or charge _____ MasterCard _____ VISA

Account # _____

Expiration date _____ Signature _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Yale University Press, Dept. DMB
92A Yale Station, New Haven, CT 06520

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the question of meaning in architecture, and a book pertinent to any discussion of classicism, is Rudolf Wittkower's *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism*, which first appeared in 1949 and has been in print ever since. Wittkower asks what distinguishes the classical architecture of the Italian Renaissance from any other classical architecture. In his discussion of Renaissance theory and practice, he explores those ideas that motivated and now explain that architecture: architectural form, more than an arrangement of pleasing shapes, is form imbued with meaning and symbolic value. Wittkower's purpose is to recover the intentions that shaped Italian Renaissance architecture—an altogether necessary endeavor if that architecture is to be understood.

Roth and Wilson make little effort to examine why McKim, Mead & White designed the kind of classical architecture that they did. Roth chooses to deal primarily with biography and description and avoids interpretation. Wilson initiates a discussion that could provide a fuller understanding of the firm's work without pursuing his preliminary observations. To note, as both authors do, that the partners were searching for an American architecture, suffices only as a point of departure. The more detailed and complete inquiry that would provide an explanation of what their architecture meant is not undertaken. The omission is regrettable, for at a basic level it prevents us from comprehending why the firm produced the buildings that it did, and why they had such a strong influence at the time.

A case in point. McKim evolved a distinctive classical design for Low Library at Columbia University, alluding to certain contemporary buildings and Roman Imperial architecture without imitating any of these structures in whole or in part. He suggested references but never copied. What was the point of this conflation, which produced a building at once seemingly familiar in its antiquarianism, yet original and unlike anything else?

A study of Low Library by Francesco Passanti (*Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, May 1977), published well before these books were prepared, demonstrated that McKim sought to accommodate the many demands of Columbia president Seth Low, as well as of the trustees, for civic representation, a memorial, an imposing image, functional effectiveness, and classical forms. He developed visual associations in the library with buildings that served civic, academic, and commemorative purposes, creating a synthesis that one hundred years ago carried a complex content. We can understand his achievement through those intentions that shaped the project because the meaning of the architecture, the circumstance of choice and purpose, has been retrieved.

Unhappily, explanatory studies are not available for other McKim, Mead & White commissions. Such studies are, of course, demanding tasks: to establish a larger context and explore intention relative to that context requires perseverance in equal measure to insight. The payoff is that it also permits understanding. Today's breathless pursuit of classicism does not allow time for the patience with evidence that explanation requires. The meaning of the classical architecture that arouses such eager interest today is lost in the rush to regain it.

Remembering the Questions

REFLECTIONS OF A NEOCONSERVATIVE: LOOKING BACK, LOOKING AHEAD. *By Irving Kristol. Basic Books. $19.95.*

Reviewed by ELIE KEDOURIE

The twenty-nine essays that make up this book were published over a period extending from 1949 to 1983. Their length and style varies according to the audience for which they were originally intended. At first sight, again, they seem to be dealing with a disparate miscellany of subjects: the culture of democratic capitalism, the political philosophy and political economy of neoconservatism, neoconservatism and foreign policy, the author's experiences as a student at CCNY and as editor of *Encounter* during the first five years of its existence, as well as religion and the Jews. But this first impression is quite

ELIE KEDOURIE, professor of politics at the London School of Economics, is the author of *Islam and the Modern World* and, most recently, *The Crossman Confessions and Other Essays in Politics, History and Religion.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

misleading. In fact, the various subjects and themes that are discussed and developed here mesh in with one another in a manner such that the book exhibits a coherent and sophisticated intellectual position, worked out with care and precision, and buttressed by learning and observation.

Though the term *neoconservative* is not one of his choosing—it was first used by the socialist writer Michael Harrington, and popularized by another socialist, Peter Steinfels, in a book published in 1979—Kristol is content to accept the appellation, and *Reflections of a Neoconservative* may be read as an attempt to give content to it, to describe the intellectual pedigree of such politics, to specify with what it is (and is not) compatible, and to indicate how it proposes to deal with social distempers and international threat.

"The most important political event of the twentieth century," begins Kristol's essay "Socialism: An Obituary for an Idea," "is not the crisis of capitalism but the death of socialism." Anti-capitalism today, Kristol goes on, is synonymous with one form or another of barbarism and tyranny. How is it, then, that a creed so manifestly gruesome in its practical manifestations, and so utterly unsuccessful in realizing what it claims to be its high and noble ideals, should yet continue to be found persuasive and attractive by the intelligent and the sensitive? Kristol's answer is that it is not the virtues of socialism, but the weaknesses of capitalism that lead these sophisticated and fastidious people to raise their voices in protest and denunciation. Socialism is for them simply the vision of a society where the corruptions of capitalism have no place. This negative vision serves to highlight those aspects of capitalist society that its pampered and spoiled children find particularly objectionable.

Kristol identifies these negative aspects that are the obverse of the virtues and successes of capitalism. Critics of capitalism have accused it of being a source of alienation. "Bourgeois society," remarks Kristol, "does tend to make all human relations 'thinner' and more abstract than is the case with a non-capitalist order." But this objection, he points out, does not take into account that this thinness has for its counterpart an individual liberty greater than history has ever known; and there are no benefits without costs.

Socialists, however, deny that such benefits exist: "A society founded solely on 'individual rights' was a society that ultimately deprived men of those virtues which could only exist in a *political community* which is something other than a 'society.' Among these virtues are a sense of distributive justice, a fund of shared moral values, and a common vision of the good life sufficiently attractive and powerful to transcend the knowledge that each individual's life ends only in death." Capitalism has not much concern with any of these virtues. On the contrary, the possibilities of nihilism, Kristol points out, are inherent in capitalist society itself. Capitalism has proved itself capable of spreading affluence widely. Affluence favors the pleasures of consumption rather than the virtues of work: " 'fly now, pay later' becomes not merely an advertising slogan, but also a popular philosophy of life." Affluence, however, creates a spiritual void that leads to disaffection and discontent among the cultivated—a disaffection that is directed not only at the actualities of bourgeois life, but also at the very idea of a society composed of free men each freely disposing of his own property. The film *Mephisto*, for

A.R.A.

Academic Research Associates is at your service to honor requests for search and /or retrieval of source material located in New York City's great institutional libraries, as well as in smaller, specialized repositories.

Requests from individual clients and university I.L.L. Departments are filled promptly, and we bill only for work completed.

We provide an entire range of reproduction processes...hard copy, microfilm and 35mm.

For further information, write:

Academic Research Associates,
719 Greenwich Street,
New York, NY 10014

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

instance, gives a powerful and striking account of the devilish lure that is exercised over the cultivated by the promise of an order that banishes the dull and the prosaic, and soars toward a life of fullness and fulfillment. What is true of the Nazi promise is equally true of the Marxist one.

But if nihilism is the product of capitalism, terrorism is the fruit of anti-capitalism. How many intellectuals who were attracted to Nazism or Marxism ever imagined that these doctrines of salvation would become associated with Auschwitz and Kolyma? As for the uncultivated sons of capitalism, at the center of whose affluence the same void appears, they have eagerly and unthinkingly taken over the subversive values of the "adversary culture" and its relentless mockery of bourgeois life. We then have "the spectacle of prosperous suburban fathers flocking to see—and evidently enjoying—*The Graduate*, or of prosperous, chic, suburban mothers unconcernedly humming 'Mrs. Robinson' to themselves as they cheerfully drive off to do their duties as den mothers."

This affluence leads to other consequences, tending to undermine the work ethos and the self-reliance that are central to the success of capitalism. Affluence sets in train a revolution of rising expectations that the competitiveness inherent in democratic politics will in turn exacerbate. The state then takes powers supposedly in order to satisfy these exorbitant demands, and democratic government becomes discredited in the process. Modern social democracy, Kristol acutely points out, is an inherently unstable system: "It generates a momentum for equality—in the bizarre sense of special privileges for all—which, unless firmly controlled, creates an overbearing, bureaucratic state confronting a restless and 'ungrateful' citizenry."

The welfarism incident to affluent capitalism also has consequences in matters of national security. These consequences are seen in the decay of the patriotic temper in Europe, in the absence of a coherent EEC foreign policy—in spite of the games of Poco (as European political cooperation is apparently called in the British Foreign Office) that ambulant ministers and officials are perpetually playing. They are also seen in the strategies of appeasement toward the Soviet Union and the Third World by which leaders, absorbed in "the inward-turning politics of compassionate reform" think to satisfy their "risk-aversive" societies. Western Europe, in short, has, for all its wealth and manpower resources, opted out of world politics. The European allies in NATO insist on avoiding involvement outside the strictly—and restrictively—defined boundaries of the NATO area. And within the NATO area itself, suspicion by many of the European members toward the U.S., and even profound dislike of its policies and outlook, is quite manifest. But the Europeans are not solely responsible for this state of affairs. Kristol points to the Suez affair of 1956 as a turning point in the history of NATO, when the U.S., having to choose between the realities of NATO and the ideals of the UN, "firmly and disastrously" chose the UN and punished its allies. This choice was the "legacy of a debased and vulgarised Wilsonianism" that, Kristol believes, permeates the foreign policy establishment to the detriment of the national interest.

One example, at once comic and sad, of such debased thinking current among the influential is a call by the Atlantic Institute for a "new partnership" between NATO and OPEC! Another is the apparent inability and unwillingness of the authorities, under the Carter administration at any rate, to emphasize that military training is meant to train for battle, that it is not simply an opportunity to learn a skilled trade. Again, at West Point, courses in military history were no longer prescribed, in order, presumably, to make West Point as much like an ordinary college campus as possible, while military discipline was interpreted as a menace to civil liberties. And since civil liberties have come to include the equality—not to say the interchangeability—of women and men, the Army had to provide for the full integration of women in its ranks. Thus, about 7 percent of U.S. soldiers in NATO are single women with children who live on the base. "The notion of fighting women is bad enough. . . . But fighting *mothers*?"

How has it come to this? Kristol's answers are complex, and his arguments refer to various levels of our historical experience. Western economic enterprise, far from having to depend, inevitably, for its functioning on a permanent pool of ever more impoverished workers (as Marx had prophesied), has succeeded in transforming the urban mob of early

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

industrialization into a prosperous urban and suburban citizenry: "The 'bourgeoisification' of society was *the* great event of modern history. Where once we had the bourgeois confronting the masses, we now have bourgeois masses." But the dialectic of bourgeoisification has now led, through increasing affluence, to the citizenry beginning to behave like an urban mob, devoid of the values that have gone to make a stable and prosperous society. The popularity of drugs in Western society today is a case in point. In itself, Kristol points out, drug addiction is not a new thing. What is new is the reason for this popularity. What it signals is a ruinous desire to secede from one's own society and civilization. And in the final analysis, such a desire denotes an inner void and a nihilism that also has other manifestations. One of these is the unrestricted spread of pornography. Pornography Kristol defines as a kind of knowledge that has an inherent tendency to deprave and corrupt. There is a presumption that its dissemination should be restricted and hindered. Yet there is also a commitment to the idea that knowledge is, in itself, good and should be spread. The clash between these two notions is far more serious than a conflict between values; it constitutes, rather, a crisis in the very idea of value. For if knowledge is, of itself, the supreme value, then knowledge of evil is on the same footing as knowledge of good, and the pornographer becomes as virtuous as the purveyor of any other kind of knowledge.

Nihilism is also the hallmark of a great deal of modern art and literature. Here the quest for authenticity and fulfillment goes on within a self bereft of any transcendental frame of reference—a self dwelling as it were in nothingness. But if nothingness is the ultimate reality, then artistic works, like everything else, are absurd, inauthentic, empty of value. Ennui or suicide become the vocation of the culture hero—a situation, Kristol declares, without parallel in human history.

Like drugs, pornography, or existentialist despair, sexual promiscuity and the cult of homosexuality are a sign of the desire to secede from society. Kristol ascribes the celebration of promiscuity and homosexuality to the irruption of gnosticism in modern Western society. Gnosticism is a powerful and abiding religious tendency. It sees the pure divine spark in man imprisoned in matter that is tainted and radically evil. Salvation means the release of the pure soul from the impure body. This is accomplished either through ascetic exercises, which, at the limit, lead to self-annihilation, or else through plunging deeper and deeper into sin and degradation, in the belief that since the body is irredeemably evil, nothing that it does or suffers can affect the purity of the soul. To go further, the more abject the degradation, the speedier the soul's release. As gnosticism sees the world, the world is not good; human procreation merely perpetuates its evil and prolongs the agony. In gnosticism the world is turned upside down: "Whether orgiastic or ascetic, gnostic sexuality rejects the injunction 'be fruitful and multiply.' In gnostic sexuality it is obscene for a woman to become pregnant in an orgy. Homosexuality contradicts that principle too, as does abortion at will." It is Gide, modernist and homosexual, who exclaimed: "Families, I hate you!"

It is thus not surprising that traditional Judaism and Christianity should have resolutely set their faces against gnosticism. Not to think that we are aliens here, exiles from a superhuman and impossible purity; to attempt, rather, to live in the world as it is, decently and commodiously, to maintain its state and ensure its safe conveyance to descendants and successors—biblical religions are much better fitted to enable their adherents to do so than the various humanisms and existentialisms that purely and simply are trapped in this world and face considerable risks of being infected with nihilism. This work of preservation and augmentation, of conveyance and transmission, is, then, the joint affair of family and religion, the "indispensable pillars of a decent society." Kristol goes further and affirms that Judaism is more in tune than Christianity is with the bourgeois ideal of work and improvement and that Jews feel more at home in the bourgeois world than in any other:

> That God created this world and affirmed its goodness; that men ought confidently to be fruitful and multiply; that work (including that kind of work we call commerce) is elevating rather than demeaning; that the impulse to "better one's conditions" (to use a favorite phrase of Adam Smith's) is good because natural—these beliefs were almost perfectly con-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gruent with the world view of postexilic Judaism. In this world view, there was no trace of aristocratic bias: Everyman was no allegorical figure but, literally, every common person.

In the chapter "Adam Smith and the Spirit of Capitalism"—the longest and perhaps the most stimulating in the book—Kristol makes the point that writers like Locke, Montesquieu, Adam Smith, and the American Founding Fathers envisaged what is now called democracy as a popular government made safe for a liberal and commercial world: a government of laws under which individuals in pursuit of happiness seek to improve their condition by engaging in commercial transactions with one another. These thinkers were able, rightly, to take certain things for granted in a way that is no longer possible for us. What, above all, they could take for granted was "a *coherence* in the private sector achieved through the influence of organized religion, traditional moral values, and the family." As has been said, the very success of capitalism, the very spread of bourgeoisification, has served to destroy the institutions, arrangements, and beliefs on which that success had originally depended. It is the distressing outcome of this dialectical process—summed up as nihilism—that neoconservatism has to face and attempt to remedy. Hence neoconservatism eschews nostalgia for the pre-capitalist past that is dead and gone forever and equally for a shining future in which all injustice and suffering are forever banished. It takes men in modern society as it finds them: exposed to the winds of nihilism, disoriented, indoctrinated into disaffection toward family, religion, and institutions; but in the mass and inherently of a conservative disposition. What the mass demands is protection against the vicissitudes of illness, old age, and unemployment. To satisfy these demands by no means requires the proliferating and intrusive bureaucracies now associated with the welfare state. Whether in Sweden, or in Britain—the models of this kind of welfarism—what has resulted is not more happiness or contentment, but a situation in which "organized labor on the one hand and the state bureaucracy on the other receive an ever-increasing share of the national income and of political power. This appetite will not be appeased by a more equal distribution of income or wealth. The demand for 'more' . . . will feed upon itself, until an economic, and eventually, political crisis will either create an authoritarian regime that copes with discontent by repressing it or provokes a reversion to a more liberal-capitalist economic order." What Kristol, as a neoconservative, wishes for is a reshaping of the welfare state such that it makes for and encourages the largest degree of individual choice. Such an aspiration is both intelligible and feasible. Beyond welfare, however, there are other problems with which free capitalist societies have to cope. Kristol points to two of them that are far from negligible. One relates to the governance of large corporations, bureaucratic and "collectivist" mutations of capitalist enterprise that Adam Smith "would surely have detested." The other, which goes to the very foundations of a free society, is the decline of religious beliefs and traditional values. These problems will continue to make the rescue of this society from the—self-created—perils besetting it, Kristol holds, "an exceedingly fragile enterprise." We look to his inventiveness and sagacity to provide some of the answers.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Professors B. J. Dobbs of Northwestern University, R. H. Popkin of Washington University, and R. S. Westfall of Indiana University are undertaking to prepare an edition of Sir Isaac Newton's alchemical/chemical and theological papers. Cambridge University Press has contracted with them for an edition of twelve volumes. They have applied to the National Endowment for the Humanities for support, and have already received support from the Van Leer Jerusalem Foundation, to aid them in editing the materials in the Yahuda collection at the National Library in Jerusalem, Israel.

If anyone knows of any Newton manuscripts in the area of their project that are in private hands, or in library or institutional collections, please contact:

Professor R. H. Popkin
Department of Philosophy
Washington University
St. Louis, MO 63130

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Reader Replies

Ethics Without Virtue

Professor Christina Hoff Sommers's article "Ethics Without Virtue," in the Summer 1984 issue of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, might have been more aptly titled "Scholarship Without Virtue" or "Philosophy Without Truth." The article contains a host of blatant inaccuracies about Brookline High School, which are easily enough corrected. To be specific:

Professor Sommers asserts "the school administration has been taken over by Kohlbergians." This is false. None of the present administrators is a product of Professor Kohlberg's training. This writer (the Headmaster) never took a course or conversed with either Professor Kohlberg or any of his disciples about his theories of moral development. To characterize the present administration of Brookline High School as "Kohlbergian" is to place the facts at the mercy of Professor Sommers's thesis. A five-minute conversation with me might not have disabused Professor Sommers of her thesis, but at least would have avoided such a gross inaccuracy.

Professor Sommers also states that the students voted "to prohibit homework assignments for vacation periods, to disallow surprise quizzes, and . . . have instituted a procedure for bringing teachers who give tests or assignments that are too demanding before a 'Fairness Committee.' " The above statements are false. There are not now, nor have there ever been such rules. The constitutional jurisdiction of Town Meeting prohibits it from exercising the powers that these statements imply.

Professor Sommers flatly states that "the school authorities handed these powers over to students 'for their own good.' " This may reflect her conclusion, but her inference belies the facts. The truth is that in the spring of 1981, after a year of lively debate, the Brookline High School teachers, students, and staff voted by referendum to establish a form of governance based on a Town Meeting. It was not "foisted" upon the school, even though some who did not vote for this form of governance may construe it so.

These errors, deliberate or otherwise, are further compounded by a parade of items that need attention. To correct the record, all students are *invited* to run for and attend the Town Meeting; it is not an exclusive or elite governing body. The Carnegie-Mellon people were *not* at Brookline High to do a film about Town Meeting. Brookline was one of several schools they filmed for a Public Television documentary. Professor Ralph Mosher of Boston University is *not* the "Chief Educational Consultant" to the Brookline Schools; he holds no such capacity, official or otherwise, except that of an interested observer and friend.

I suspect that Professor Sommers has underestimated her audience and her task. Were she writing for *Time* or *Newsweek*, that would be one thing. But in the company of scholars, opinions need to be more balanced and carefully contrived. Her sweeping condemnations of education, schools, and the moral fiber of students would have rendered her article unacceptable as a Senior Paper at Brookline High. Moreover, her use of "guilt by association" would not have been tolerated. As Sommers said to me in a telephone conversation, "Well, you *did* go to Harvard, didn't you?" Yes, I did. Yes, I admire and respect Professors Kohlberg and Mosher. And I might add my admiration for the ethics, virtue, and quality of their scholarship far outstrip my respect for Professor Sommers's rhetorical tactics. If Ms. Sommers is the example of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, we had best examine the ethics, not to say virtues, of our university training.

ROBERT B. MCCARTHY
Headmaster
Brookline High School
Brookline, Massachusetts

CHRISTINA HOFF SOMMERS replies: My response is somewhat longer than the Headmaster's letter; it takes more time to untie knots in the truth than it takes to tie them.

Dr. McCarthy might reasonably have chosen to defend Brookline High School for what it is: a celebrated paradigm of Kohlbergian practice. He has instead perversely elected to deny the Kohlbergian character of his school and his own role in supporting and promoting it. The facts concerning the implementation of Kohlberg's ideas at Brookline High in matters of moral education and school governance are available in many articles, books, and dissertations. For convenience I draw them here from a single but apt source, a book edited by Ralph Mosher entitled *Moral Education: A First*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Generation of Research and Development (Praeger, 1980).

In 1974 Professors Kohlberg and Mosher approached Robert Sperber, the Superintendent of Brookline Schools, with the idea of initiating a program of teacher training in Kohlberg's methods at the high school level (p. 58). The project, later underwritten by the Danforth Foundation, had, as a second objective "the establishment of a [Kohlbergian] 'just community' concept in the Brookline alternative high school" (p. 77). Sperber reports that his own support and that of the Brookline School Committee "made it possible for Professors Kohlberg and Mosher to proceed vigorously" with the major objectives of the project. Sperber notes that "adopting the cognitive development approach of Kohlberg, as was done in Brookline, puts a heavy demand on administrators, teachers and students." He quotes Mosher as saying: "Critical to the success of the project has been an administrative climate of support." Sperber's recipe for success includes advice to "empower an internal well-trained cadre" and to "free this group to work a substantial amount of time on this project" (p. 82). Understandably, not all of the teachers and administrators were as enthusiastic as Sperber or Henry Zabierek (the Chair of Social Studies who collaborated closely with Mosher) (p. 83ff.) about these new developments. In particular, the previous Headmaster was not a Kohlbergian. When he left, Dr. McCarthy was Sperber's choice to replace him.

In recent years Brookline High has become a seeding ground for the spread of the movement. The idea of giving Brookline focal importance was there from the beginning. Thus Mosher says:

> The Brookline Dissemination Center for Moral Education was not anticipated in 1974, although this kind of role for a school system and for some of the teachers and counselors associated with the project was nurtured very deliberately. (p. 17)

Mosher observes that Brookline is particularly suited to this role. He talks about the "special town and gown relationship between Brookline, Cambridge, Boston University and Harvard" and goes on to say:

> Many faculty members in both school systems were attracted to graduate study in connection with the ongoing research and development on moral education and school democracy. Indeed, most of the authors of this book, now academics, are former employees of the two public school systems. Where they have left the schools proper they have moved to positions of continued leadership in public education. (p. 372)

Referring to responses to what he calls "my 1976 call to the schools to make the world safe for Stage 5 democracy," Kohlberg cites schools in Brookline, Pittsburgh, and Los Angeles with particular attention to the work of Ralph Mosher at Brookline (p. 28).

It is therefore preposterous to deny the Kohlbergian character of Brookline High unless one is bringing hard evidence to show that the situation has been radically turned around. McCarthy would have us believe that the present administration is relatively free of the influence of Kohlberg and Mosher. But precisely the opposite is true: from the moment of his appointment as Headmaster, McCarthy has been a strong and indeed zealous advocate of Kohlberg "Stage 4" type of school governance. He received federal money to institute the Town Meeting and Fairness Committee along the lines of Kohlberg's Cluster School, and he brought in a disciple of Kohlberg to help put the structures in place. More conservative alternatives that would have given the faculty a substantial role in school governance were rejected by McCarthy. The referendum he refers to was, in fact, carefully orchestrated to ensure the desired Kohlbergian outcome.

McCarthy's formal criteria for being a Kohlbergian are of course far too strict: one can be, say, a good Machiavellian without ever having taken a course or even casually conversed with Machiavelli. Dr. McCarthy is a useful Kohlbergian, as are many current administrators and faculty of the Brookline School system.

McCarthy berates me for having called Mosher "Chief Educational Consultant"—a title he never had. Looking at my article one will find the quoted words but without the uppercase letters that turn an apt description into a formal title. (Mosher refers to himself in virtually those words: "I as the principal consultant . . ." (p. 279). McCarthy's misquotation is not innocent. On all fours with this is his charge that I made up the rule prohibiting teachers from giving assignments that would force students to do homework during vacation periods. The rule does accomplish this. I quote from the Handbook on Student Governance:

> If a homework assignment requiring a substantial amount of reading or writing is made over vacation, adequate time must be provided to the students either before or after the vacation to complete the assignment.

Several teachers have informed me that this has had the effect of eliminating vacation assignments.

Finally it may come as no surprise to find that McCarthy's charge that I deliberately misrepresented the purpose of the visiting film people from Carnegie-Mellon is another bit of trumpery. In the unlikely case that McCarthy may actually be unaware of why Carnegie-Mellon film personnel appear on his campus from time to time or, for that matter, why Mosher himself continues his regular visits to the campus, he could learn much by reading the book of Mosher. On the film matter:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Films, film strips, workshop materials, and a national consortium of trainers of moral educators, centered at Carnegie-Mellon University in Pittsburgh, are in place. They constitute the critical mass for a major teacher training and dissemination effort at the secondary school level in the near future. (p. 379)

Like it or not, McCarthy is one of the faithful of the brave new world envisioned by a movement for the reform of moral education that has its philosophical seat at the Harvard Center of Moral Education. Adherents of the movement are much given to light-headed talk about America's "authoritarian schools" being in dire need of this or that stage of Kohlbergian democracy—to be brought into being by Ph.D.'s from Harvard and Boston University Schools of Education.

A Good School

Diane Ravitch's article in the Autumn 1984 issue is about equally encouraging and depressing. It is encouraging to think that good results can be achieved with a somewhat heterogeneous population, but it is depressing to realize that Edward R. Murrow High School in Brooklyn is really an elitest institution that apparently merely demonstrates the obvious: Any school that carefully selects its students and its teachers is bound to be successful, especially with a strong principal, such as Saul Bruckner.

Professor Ravitch's article leaves many questions unanswered:

1. Since Murrow is officially an experimental school, is it part of a *controlled* experiment? Or is this school merely an excuse for providing some students with an excellent education at the expense of the New York City school system?
2. Does Murrow "prove" that the students in New York should be segregated in terms of their behavior? And is it legally possible to do that?
3. If all principals in New York City were allowed to operate as Mr. Bruckner does, deliberately subverting official regulations in the hiring of teachers, closing down a department in order to get rid of someone he doesn't like, and forcing all of his teachers to use one method of instruction, how long would it take for the New York City school system to be closed down by protesting teachers, students, and parents?

Regardless of how successful Murrow High School may be, little can be learned from it that is applicable to the entire City of New York and other large urban centers except perhaps that more elitest institutions should be created for those who want to learn and do well, while efforts are being made to devise ways to deal successfully with the diverse population now found in many public schools that can't select their students or their teachers.

As interesting as Professor Ravitch's article is, she would render a greater service if she wrote about successful schools of a more typical sort where a diverse population of students and teachers under the leadership of a capable principal is achieving results worthy of note, or are such schools hard to find?

Professor Ravitch concludes her article by citing some of the things that effective schools have in common, among them, a mix of students from different backgrounds. Is that really true? She says, for example, of Murrow High, quoting one of its teachers, that "The climate of the school is middle-class Jewish." Isn't it a fact that, in most communities where there are fine schools, the population tends to be more homogeneous than otherwise? Indeed, isn't the success of Murrow High a sad commentary on the failure of our large school systems to deal effectively with the entire school population?

WILLIAM WALTER DUNCAN
Bronx Community College
New York, New York

DIANE RAVITCH replies: Mr. Duncan's letter implies that the success of the Edward R. Murrow High School proves that it is atypical, and therefore unworthy of study and emulation. He criticizes the principal of the school for bending the rules of the system, even though the rules of the system are obstacles to running a good school. How can a principal shape a good school when he can't select his staff? How can teachers feel professional when they can't choose the school where they work? It may not be possible to achieve educational excellence in a school run according to civil service rules.

Murrow's student body is not "somewhat heterogeneous": Half of its students are white, and half are from minority groups. Even in New York City, that mixture still defines heterogeneity. Contrary to Mr. Duncan's assertion, Murrow's academic success demonstrates that a public school need not be ethnically and racially homogeneous in order to provide good education to all its students.

Would students, teachers, and parents close down the school system if every principal fought the rigidities of the school system? The students wouldn't: There are ten applicants for every space available at Murrow. The parents wouldn't: They connive and plead to get their children admitted. The teachers wouldn't: They line up eagerly to teach in a school with the tone and standards of Murrow. Every good school, I suspect, is atypical. In a school system as rule-bound as New York City's, it may be impossible to succeed in any conventional terms without finding ways to subvert the system.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Quantum Reality

Dr. Ingram Bloch of Vanderbilt University was kind enough to point out to me a statement in my column "Quantum Reality" (Winter 1984/85) that was misleading. This involves a rather technical matter, so I won't go into much detail but will just set the record straight. The Bohm version of the Einstein, Podolsky, Rosen experiment involves an atom that disintegrates into two components with a total spin zero—for example, two electrons with opposite spin. If an observer measures the spin of one of the electrons along a given direction and a distant observer measures the spin along the same direction, they will get equal and opposite results. Now if one observer rotates his measurement axis and the other does likewise, they will still get equal and opposite results when the measurements are compared. For this to happen it is essential that the two observers correlate their results. It is this element that was unclear in what I wrote.

JEREMY BERNSTEIN
New York, New York

What's So Funny?

It was with considerable astonishment and regret that, in reading Aristides' column in the Autumn 1984 SCHOLAR, I came across a partial list of people whom Aristides would place in a "pantheon of the humorless." There, high on the list, was Woodrow Wilson!

By all indications, Aristides is a learned and witty man himself. Therefore, only a failure ever to have seriously studied the life of Woodrow Wilson could lead him into so egregious an error as to classify Wilson as a humorless man.

I commend to Aristides the reading of the hundreds of volumes written about Wilson by all sorts of people, friends and enemies, as well as the forty-seven volumes already published in *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*. He will find oceans of testimony to Wilson's sense of humor. He loved mimicry, charades, story telling, anecdotes, quick repartee, the theater, vaudeville, and endless interests involving humor. This is reflected strongly in the many personal memoirs by his daughter, Eleanor Wilson McAdoo; his secretary, Tumulty; his physician, Admiral Grayson; his wife, Edith Bolling Wilson; his colleagues, e.g., William Starr Myers; and writers without number.

The definitive biographer of Wilson, Arthur Link, says that "in the intimate group, he could be uproariously funny as a story-teller or mimic." Such testimony abounds. How can one describe as humorless the man who, when Tumulty remonstrated that he would ruin his constitution with such unrelenting work habits, replied, "Constitution? Why man, I'm already living on my by-laws!" Or the man who, when his enemy, Senator Albert Fall, came to call on him when he lay paralyzed in bed from his stroke, and left saying that he was praying for the President, could have the last word (after Fall had left the room) by exclaiming, "Why does he try to get me in bad with the Almighty! He must know God will take the opposite side from him on any question!"

In an article on "The Human Side of Woodrow Wilson," written by Virginius Dabney, which appeared in *The Virginia Quarterly Review* in the Autumn of 1956, Dabney described Wilson as "a man who danced hornpipes on station platforms while campaigning for the presidency and jigs in the White House after his election; who was fervently addicted to Gilbert and Sullivan, loved limericks, wrote some good ones himself, and recited nonsense verse on many occasions; was one of the best story-tellers of his time and a mimic of rare talent."

Please, dear and respected Aristides, read up on Woodrow Wilson and never again perpetrate such a calumny as to classify him among the humorless ones of this world, no matter how distinguished the company!

PERRY LAUKHUFF
Amherst, Virginia

"What's So Funny?" is what's so funny in the Autumn issue, but if Aristides is just in placing Woodrow Wilson in the pantheon of the humorless, then the following sexagenarian anecdote is apocryphal: Shortly before Wilson's naming Brandeis to the Supreme Court, someone asked Wilson why he hadn't considered Colonel House. Wilson's immediate reply was: "A House is not a Holmes."

BERNARD ADELMAN
Winthrop, Massachusetts

ARISTIDES replies: I hereby remove Woodrow Wilson from the pantheon of the humorless, inserting in his place Jane Fonda.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

il·lu·mi·nat·ing

Minds, Brains and Science

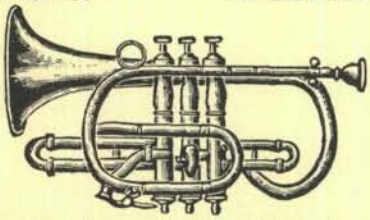
John Searle

How can we reconcile a picture of ourselves as conscious, free, and rational beings while science tells us that the universe consists of mindless physical particles?

In his characteristically down-to-earth style, Searle offers a philosophy that helps dispel the apparent incongruities between common sense and science.

"This book is aggressive, zealous, and acute. Searle's manner is that of a plain man in possession of plain truths that no one can reject...I can't think of another book quite like it."

$10.00 –Arthur Danto



Contemplating Music

Challenges to Musicology

Joseph Kerman

This is a book for all serious music lovers, one that establishes the place of music study firmly in the mainstream of modern intellectual history. Kerman expands the concept of musicology beyond its traditional concern to include discussions of music theory and analysis, ethnomusicology, and music criticism.

In the process, he provides the first, full-scale account of the ideas and ideologies that have transformed music over the last forty years.

$15.00

Using Biography

William Empson

Distinguished critic William Empson shows the ways in which an understanding of biographical material can deepen the reader's appreciation of a writer's methods and intentions.

This book, typical of his witty, iconoclastic style, explores the works of writers as diverse as Marvell, Dryden, Fielding, Yeats, Eliot, and Joyce.

"I rate him as the chief English literary critic of the century ...[His] is almost certainly the finest study of Fielding ever written. The essay on Joyce is a great work. There is nothing to touch it."

$17.50 –Frank Kermode

Mikhail Bakhtin

Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist

In just a few decades, Russian literary critic and historian Mikhail Bakhtin has evolved from a virtual unknown to one of the major interdisciplinary thinkers of our century.

Clark and Holquist have written the only full-scale biography of this fascinating man, and the first work to treat the full range of his intellectual activity in such varied fields as literary theory, psychology, and Marxist thought.

"Clark and Holquist have transformed our understanding of Bakhtin."

–Stephen J. Greenblatt

$25.00

Belknap

Definitive reading.

At bookstores or from Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA 02138

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NEW FROM ILLINOIS

Beyond Velikovsky
The History of a Public Controversy

Henry H. Bauer

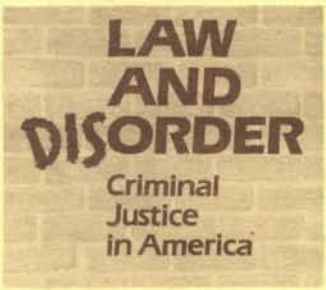
"A very valuable contribution to the literature on a major controversy of great psychological and sociological importance. It is well written, quite objective in steering a course between two partisan camps, and sure to generate a considerable amount of interest among scientists and the general public." — Robert Jastrow, director of NASA's Institute for Space Studies.

Since the appearance of *Worlds in Collision* (1950), Immanuel Velikovsky's radical theories of planetary physics have been the center of controversy. In this fair-minded and lucid book, Bauer investigates both Velikovsky's popularity and his isolation from the scientific establishment.
1985. 352 pages. Illustrated. $21.95.

Law and Disorder
Criminal Justice in America

Bruce Jackson

"This work demands attention. Jackson, author of many books on crime and prisons, argues that the U.S. criminal justice system — police, courts, prisons — is 'incapable of solving the crime problem,' despite public demands that it do so. . . . Drawing on interviews, studies, and official reports, Jackson offers an incisive examination of these agencies' inner workings — from police arrests to trials to prison life. . . . Criminal justice workers 'manage the eruptions when they occur,' he notes, but genuine efforts to deal with crime must focus on its roots in the larger society." — *Publishers Weekly.*
1984. 336 pages. $19.95.



Chinese Defense Policy

Edited by Gerald Segal and William T. Tow

"In their introduction to this timely and policy-relevant book, the editors ask a provocative and strategically relevant question: How strong is China? They then raise five additional questions, the answers to which, they suggest, will provide a bottom-line assessment regarding China's overall defense posture and capabilities. . . . One of the first major efforts to tackle, in a comprehensive fashion, questions that have important implications for U.S. foreign policy and strategic planning." — *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists.*
1984. 308 pages. $29.95.

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS PRESS
54 E. Gregory Drive, Champaign IL 61820

Order toll free 800/638-3030.
Maryland residents phone 301/824-7300.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED